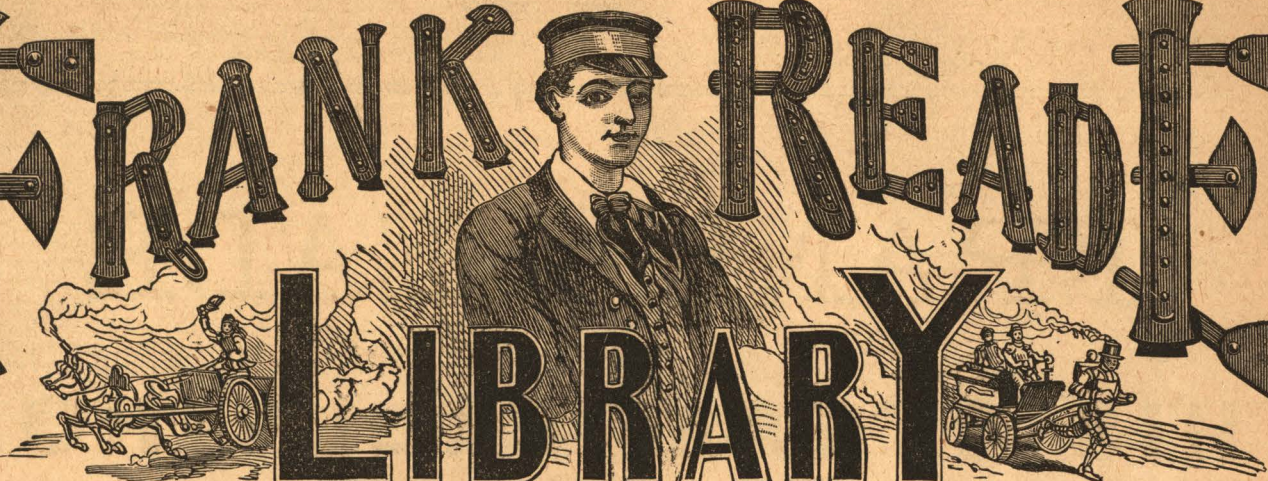


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Vol. I

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FRANK READE AND HIS STEAM TALLY-HO. ❁ By "NONAME."



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FRANK READE

AND

HIS STEAM TALLY-HO.

By the Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., and his Air-Ship," "Frank Reade, Jr., and his Adventures with his Latest Invention," "Frank Reade, Jr., and his Electric Boat," "Frank Reade, Jr., and his Steam Wonder," Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER I.

FRANK READE AND HIS COUSIN.

ONE evening a young man was sitting before a small fire in a grate in an up-town house in the city of New York, looking abstractedly at the glaring coals, as though his thoughts were far away from his surroundings. His elbow rested on an arm of the easy-chair in which he sat, and his chin rested in the palm of his hand.

There was a dreamy look in his eyes. But in spite of their repose, there was a sparkle of genius in every glance of those eyes, and in every lineament of that pale face with the high forehead.

Do you not know him, reader?

Look again.

You have seen him before, and where stronger men than he had feared to go.

He is Frank Reade, the young genius of the "Steam Man," the "Steam Horse," and the "Steam Team." He whom you followed with interest through his terrible adventures in the Far West.

That busy brain has not been idle since last you saw him. On the contrary, he has been busier than ever. He could not be otherwise. His active mind would not be content in simply repeating an invention. He must excel, improve and astonish the world with something both new and startling.

But we anticipate.

Sitting there before the fire, he was thinking of the time when he was careering over the boundless prairies of the West behind his gallant team of steam horses, whose speed seemed almost to annihilate space, when the door opened and a servant laid a letter on the table, which the postman had just delivered.

He glanced at the address in a careless, indifferent sort of way for a moment or two. Then a sudden change came over him. He started as if stung, wheeled around, seized the letter, and literally tore it from the envelope.

It was from Charley Gorse, his cousin and companion in many a desperate adventure with the Steam Team.

"DEAR FRANK," it read. "Utterly disgusted with a quiet, hum-dram life since I wrote you last, I shall start to-morrow for New York, with the intention of taking passage for Europe. I can't stand it any longer. I should die of ennui in another month. As long as the Steam Team was on hand I could stand it; but the whole thing now lies at the bottom of the Great Canyon, 2,000 feet deep, where the resurrection will never reach it. A Pawnee chief tried to steal it from me by mounting the seat and dashing off with it. He had noticed how I started it, but he didn't know how to stop it. I wonder where he is now? I doubt if there was enough of him left hanging together to entitle

him to admittance to the Happy Hunting Grounds of his Heaven. Barney O'Shea is coming with me, as he says he hopes to reach Ireland in time to get up a ruction with the English landlords. He has been so quiet of late that he has soured. Only yesterday he had a little ruction with Pomp, and blessed all the saints for the little entertainment, notwithstanding the fact that he was butted out of time. Look out for us.

"Your cousin, CHARLEY GORSE."

"Whew!" exclaimed Frank, laying down the letter, "what a narrow escape! In another day we would have passed each other on the road, and then all the fun would have been spoiled. How fortunate it is! Let me see. He ought to reach Jersey City in the morning some time. I'll go down and meet him. He will open his eyes wide when I tell him my plans for the summer; and I'll wager he won't say Europe once after that. As for Barney, he's the devil's own for 'an illegant toime,' as he expresses it. There's just room for four without crowding, in the Tally-Ho, though we could double it if necessary. Yes, they are both in the humor for another wild ride over the boundless prairie, and we'll have it. Everything is in readiness, packed and boxed for shipment, rifles, revolvers, ammunition, camp utensils—everything. How fortunate I am to get this letter! I would have been sorely disappointed."

He then relapsed into a deep reverie, and remained undisturbed till the midnight warning of the clock on the mantel sent him to bed.

The next day when the Erie Railway train thundered into the depot in Hoboken, Frank Reade was there waiting to meet and welcome his cousin, whom he had not seen for a couple of years.

As the passengers poured out of the long train in such a dense mass, Frank began to fear he would miss him after all. He mounted a small box in order to get a better view of the passengers as they surged in a dense mass toward the ferry.

"Be me sowl!" exclaimed a well-known voice in the crowd, "it's the young jaynius I see, begob!" and a stalwart Irishman upset two countrymen in his endeavors to meet him.

"Halloo, Barney!" cried Frank, grasping the horny hand of the gallant son of Erin in his. "I am glad to see you. But where is Charley?"

"Masther Charles, is it? Bedad, he's gone blind entoirely looking for yez," replied Barney O'Shea, the glorious rough-and-tumble, rollicking Irishman of the famous Steam Team of two years ago.

"Frank!"

"Charley!" and the next moment the two cousins were shaking each other's hands in a way that threatened damage to their elbows.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, throwing his cap in the air and catching it on his head as it came down.

"See here, you bellowing Irish bull!" exclaimed a railroad official, "stop that, or I'll have you put out."

"Be aisy, now," said Barney, with a ludicrous grin on his face. "Run an' hide, quick, ye gossoon!"

"What do you mean?" demanded the official, growing red in the face as the passengers began to laugh at him.

"Och, but it's a great moind ye have," said Barney. "Bedad, I'll hire yez to—"

"Get out of here!" angrily exclaimed the man, seizing him by the arm and attempting to run him into the throng that was still surging into the ferry-house. But to his astonishment he could not move him out of his tracks.

"Get behind an' push, yer gossoon," suggested Barney.

"Get along, now, will you?"

"Av course I will," said Barney, seizing him by the arm and leading him into the crowd in spite of his desperate efforts to free himself. The man kicked and swore, but all in vain.

"Be shtill, ye lunatic!" cautioned Barney, as he trudged close behind the two cousins as they entered the ferry-boat.

Charley Gorse heard his voice, and looked behind to see who he was talking to, and saw the railroad hand struggling to get away from him.

"What in blue blazes are you up to, Barney?" he demanded.

"Bedad, but he was croying for his mither," said Barney, sympathetically, as he released the man.

The hand barely had time to leap ashore when the ferry-boat shoved out into the stream.

A few passengers who had seen Barney handling the bumptious railroad hand now crowded around him, and laughed heartily over his good-natured sayings till they reached the other side of the river. There Frank had a carriage in waiting for them. Barney, Irish-like, climbed up and sat with the driver, while Charley and Frank seated themselves inside.

"Charley," said the young inventor to his cousin, "I got your letter just in time! I would have been off myself this morning to be gone for the summer."

"By George, it was lucky I wrote, then!" exclaimed Charley. "I intended at first to surprise you, but at last concluded to drop you a few lines. All well at home?"

"Yes—as usual."

"Glad to hear it. Which way were you going for the summer? Better do Europe with me."

"Ah, there's no fun in Europe," and Frank

shrugged his shoulders. "I want to see some fun and not sights."

"Barney says there's going to be an 'illegant' ruction in Ireland, and he is just itching to get a hand in it. The land leaguers are making things lively over there, you know."

"Yes, but standing up to be shot down by British soldiers isn't at all funny," remarked Frank, with an indifferent manner about him. "I say, I had a good laugh last night when I read of the fate of the Steam Team. Did it actually run away with a Pawnee chief?"

"Well, right there is where the whole trfbe and myself differ," answered Charley, laughing. "I charge that he did, but the Pawnees say the Team ran away with their chief, and they want to raise my hair for me just to yrove that they are right. Of course I couldn't argue the point with 'em, though Barney did convince two, I believe, to our way of thinking, but he had to kill them to do it?"

Frank laughed long and heartily over the story.

"Did you ever find any traces of the team?" he finally asked.

"No."

"How in thunder did you know what became of it, then?"

"Well, the Canyon was only fifteen miles away. It couldn't cross, and of course plunged in. I met a half-drunken Pawnee afterward, and asked him where Big Wolf, the chief was. He gave me a look of hate, muttered h—l, and proudly stalked away. If that was where the chief was, I knew it was no use to look for the Team, as they both went off together."

Frank again roared.

"I am willing to lose the Team," he declared, wiping his eyes, "for the sake of the laugh. It was worn considerably, and, besides, it was old-fashioned. I want something new and better."

Charley looked at him in astonishment.

"Where can you find anything in all the wide—wide world to beat that Steam Team?" he asked.

"I've got something that beats it," calmly replied Frank, as the carriage stopped in front of the house. "But here we are. Welcome, Charley. They'll be glad to see you," and opening the door the young inventor sprang lightly to the ground.

CHAPTER II.

THE REVELATION—LAYING PLANS FOR THE TRIP.

Of course the Reade family gave the stalwart young Western relative a glad, hearty welcome. There was a manliness and frankness about him that everybody liked. They knew what a true friend he had been to Frank when his life was despaired of once out on the plains, and loved him for all his good qualities.

Barney O'Shea they had laughed at hundreds of times as Frank would tell of his peculiarities and inordinate fondness for "ructions" where the skill of Killarney could be displayed. Of course they gave him a hearty welcome, and the bold son of Erin felt in honor bound to kiss Annie O'Hara, the cook, which she resented with a resounding slap on the cheek.

"Och, yez are a bould bye, Barney O'Shea!" she exclaimed.

"Thru for ye, Annie, me darlint, au' be the token I'll give yez another," and with that he seized her again and stole another from her lips.

There was a tussle in which the three Irish girls of the household joined in and forced him to beat a retreat.

In the afternoon the two cousins took a drive in Central Park, during which Frank Reade unfolded his plans to Charley.

"I've beaten myself, Charley, old boy," he said, enthusiastically, "and have reached the point of perfection in my line of invention. You thought the Steam Man the maximum of steam mechanism; that the Steam Horse was a step still higher in practical application of the principle, and that the Steam Team was the limit of inventive genius. But I've got something that beats all three together. There is no room

for accident, no flaw in construction, no chance for inquisitive Pawnees to—"

"For Heaven's sake, Frank!" exclaimed Charley, greatly excited, "tell me what you are talking about!"

"I am talking about my steam Tally-Ho," was the reply.

Charley looked at him in blank amazement.

He knew what a Tally-Ho was, but it required some few moments for a full conception of the thing to get through his mind. Had he not known Frank's capabilities in the peculiar application of steam, he would not have been able to grasp his full meaning.

"A steam Tally-Ho!" he exclaimed. "Frank, don't trifle with me!"

"Yes, and the finest you ever saw on the road in your life," replied the young inventor, "and as gay as paint and varnish can make it, drawn by three coal-black steeds, swift as the deer and as handsome as race horses."

"Whoop—hurrah for the Tally-Ho and the West!" cried Charley.

Barney O'Shea leaped from the driver's seat, and put his head in at the carriage.

"Begob, is it a ruction yez are having all to yerself, Masther Charley?" he asked.

"Barney O'Shea, you won't see old Erin this summer," said Charley.

"Bad cess to—"

"We're going back West," said Charley, not heeding his remark, "and kick up a ruction every day for pastime."

Barney was puzzled. The carriage had stopped, and the two young men were getting out to walk about and enjoy the scenery. Charley explained the Tally-Ho to him in a few words, and then he gave a wild Irish yell that made a park policeman's hair rise.

"Whoop!" he yelled, looking up and knocking his heels together. "The young jaynius forever!"

Frank and Charley both laughed at his enthusiasm. The policeman came up and eyed him suspiciously. Barney returned his stare and yelled again.

"Bedad!" said the policeman, "he's off av his nut."

"Look out, Barney," said Frank, "or that cop will run you in."

Barney looked hard at the gray-coated officer again, and smiled.

"Begob, but I belave it's me Cousin Mike Mulhooly, of ould—"

"Is it you, Barney O'Shea?" exclaimed the astonished policeman, suddenly darting forward and grasping the hand of his countryman.

"Bedad, luk at me, Mike!" exclaimed Barney; "it's so full av good news I am that I've forgotten me grandfather's name," and the two shook hands vigorously.

"Be me soul, but it's glad to see yer I am, Barney," said Mike. "It's meself as heard the red nagurs had skulped ye, an'—"

"Divil a skulp!" interrupted Barney; "it's meself as gave 'em an illegant ruction three toimes a day till they had to send me to Congress to have paze in the family."

"Howly Moses, Barney, is it a Congressman ye are?" asked the dumfounded policeman.

"Wud I tell yez a loie, Mike Mulhooly? Ask the sinator, there, bedad, and take off yer hat."

Charley and Frank nearly split themselves with efforts to repress the laugh that effervesced within them. They saw at a glance that Barney was envious of the success of his old chum's success in rising to be a park policeman, and wanted to overwhelm him with a story of his own greatness.

Mike took it all in, invited Barney to call at his house, and told many stories of his adventures in the metropolis of America.

Leaving Barney O'Shea to entertain the gray-coated guardian of the park, Frank took Charley's arm and strolled about the Mall with him.

"Yes," he said, "it is the most complete thing in the world. There isn't a piece of wood in the whole thing. Everything of the best wrought iron, and cost me over fifteen thousand dollars to get it up. It is a traveling fort. We can sleep all night with a thousand Indians around us, and laugh them to scorn when

awake. Everything is complete, and, on good ground, can make twenty miles an hour. I am going to make a fortune by carrying the mails and passengers through hostile sections after I have had my fun with it this summer. You are right. I will go West with it. In fact, it is boxed and in the cars ready to be shipped to a little station on the Kansas Pacific railroad, where we will put it together, and start out for a summer vacation. There is nothing wanting. Half a dozen best Winchester rifles, a dozen revolvers, several shillelahs for Barney, ammunition, and plenty of good things to eat and drink."

"Frank, you have taken my heart by storm—don't say any more, but come on; let's take the next train for the West. I am just itching for the old, wild, free life again."

"Where is Pomp, the black, rollicking marks-man?"

"At home, grieving himself to death because I wouldn't bring him along," replied Charley. "I don't think he could stay there much longer."

"Well, we'll want him along, you know. He is game, and knows just what to do in a tough place."

"Oh, won't he grin and dance when he sees us!" exclaimed Charley.

"Well, we'll start to-morrow morning, if you say so. But maybe you would like to see some of the sights of the city before going?"

"Not much," and Charley shook his head very emphatically. "I want to see that Tally-Ho on the open prairie, Frank. That, and nothing more."

"Well, then, we'll be off to-morrow," and calling Barney, they entered the carriage and drove back to the residence of Frank Reade's father.

CHAPTER III.

OUT ON THE BOUNDLESS PRAIRIE.

On the way back to the house Barney O'Shea gave frequent exclamations of delight at the idea of an immediate return to the West. He was all eagerness to go now that the promise of adventure was held out to him. The next morning found him the most eager of the three, and when the train started he gave a whoop that brought the conductor at once to his side.

"It's the toothache I have," he said, by way of apology, to the conductor.

"Well, you had better go forward and ride on the cow-catcher," suggested the conductor; "the wind will blow it out for you if you hold your mouth open."

"Bedad, an' it's blowed all yer manners away, too," said Barney, as he saw the passengers laughing at him.

"Yes—the toothache spoils one's manners badly. You yell again and see what effect it will have. Every hand on this train will show very bad manners to you," and the very determined conductor went away, leaving the impression that he meant business.

"You had better wait until we start on the Tally-Ho before you yell again," suggested Charley.

"It's right yer are, Masther Charles," said Barney. "Bedad, but I'll make the horses run their legs off wid one wild whoop!"

On the third day out they reached the little station on the Kansas Pacific Railroad to which the Tally-Ho had been shipped. It was a small place, only a few stores and a tavern there.

The three strangers attracted no little notice from those about the place. They had the appearance of city chaps, and the residents tried to make their hair curl by telling of bloody deeds by Indians and road-agents in the country just below there.

The freight had not yet come to hand, but would probably be in the next day, the agent said. Nothing to do but wait, and wait they did, listening in silence to all the yarns any one chose to tell them.

At last the freight came, and they set to work to put the Steam Tally-Ho together. The first to put up was the coach itself. Box after box was opened, and every piece found to fit snugly in its place.

First the, four wheels were put up, solid, substantial and heavy, painted in the highest style of the art. Then came all the rest. It took them a whole day to get it up, and when it was finished, Charley and Barney were unbounded in their expressions of delight.

The Tally-Ho was a beauty to behold, painted and varnished in gay colors, with a double seat forward and two further back. In the main body was storage for everything necessary for a long trip, as well as a refuge in time of danger. By a sudden turning of a crank the top opened and swallowed up the passengers, closing again, thus incasing them in an iron shell through which no rifle ball could penetrate. All around were small adjustable port-holes, through which those inside could see and fire when necessary. By a secret arrangement, the driver could manage and guide the team as well inside as when perched on the more elevated seat.

"Oh, she is a jewel!" exclaimed Charley, as he caught all the points of the wonderful invention.

"Arrah, but it's me swateheart she is!" cried Barney, dancing around the splendid vehicle like an overjoyed school-boy.

"Blow me if I see how any horses will pull that 'ere thing," said one of the residents who had been standing around all day watching the proceedings. "Why, it's all iron, an' as heavy as a mountain."

"I guess we can move it if we can get horses enough," said Charley.

"Yes, but you'll want about twenty horses."

"Guess we can get along with three," remarked Frank.

"Bet yer don't go out three days afore ye're stuck, scalped, and everlastingly cleaned out," said a swaggering specimen of the Western bluffer.

"Name your 'pile,'" said Frank, turning suddenly on the man. "Put up or shat up."

"Hyers er hundred dollars," said the man, drawing five twenty-dollar gold pieces from his pocket.

"I'll cover it and go a thousand better," said Frank.

"It's all I have, stranger."

"Well, there's a hundred to cover it. The agent here will be stake-holder," and they both handed the money to the station-agent, who wrote down the bet and put it away in his safe.

Then they commenced putting up the iron horses, one by one. They were beauties—coal-black, with white foreheads, powerful limbs and feet. The claws on their hoofs took firm hold on the ground, which rendered slipping utterly impossible, except on glass.

Their internal arrangements were similar to those of the famous Steam Team of two years ago, though more carefully built and polished.

When they assumed shape the by-standers were astounded.

"Iron hosses, by the Lord!" gasped an old pioneer. "What'll come next, I wonder!"

"But kin a iron hoss run?" asked the man who had put up his money against the success of the thing.

"Blast me if I know. They run steam engines on the railroads, and darned if I don't believe they'll make something yet to run on the plains, swim rivers, and climb mountains."

The man who had bet all his money began to look blue as the horses approached completion. They had such a formidable look that he was afraid even to stand before them lest they should plunge forward and crush him.

That night Pomp came in answer to a telegram from Charley ordering him to meet him at the station.

Barney took him around and showed him the Tally-Ho. Pomp was wild with excitement.

"Bless de Lord, dere's some more fun fo' dis chile yet!" he said, grinning from ear to ear as he moved around and inspected the splendid piece of mechanism.

The third horse, or leader, was the last one put up. He was a beauty—large and powerful. On his head he wore a plume—or what would be a plume when steam was up to blow through

it in a white cloud. His eyes, as were the eyes of the others, were of solid glass balls, inside of which were electric lights, to be turned on or off as needed. The necks were arranged so the heads could be raised or lowered, as desired, and turned either right or left by means of a secret crank in the Tally-Ho. On the heads of the two hind horses were steam whistles, which could awaken the echoes for miles around.

The reins were ribbons of fine steel covered with leather, so they could not be cut. Everything was complete.

"We'll start in the morning, boys, by the bright light," said Frank, as he proceeded to open the boxes containing the arms, ammunition and camp utensils. These were placed inside the Tally-Ho and fastened up.

Early the next morning, the whole population of the place were out to see them off. The furnace that made the steam was not even exposed to view, and they were amazed at the sight. Steam began to show at the escape-valves.

"All aboard!" shouted Frank, who had now put on a regular Western hunter's garb, as had Charley also, climbing up to the driver's seat.

Charley Gorse took a seat by his side, carrying a brace of revolvers in his belt.

"Whoop—hurrah!" yelled Barney O'Shea, as he stood up in his place. "Shtand out all creation. The young jaynius forever!"

Pomp climbed up behind, and took his place in a seat put up for him, crossed his arms, and looked pityingly down at the gaping crowd of hoosiers.

Pulling suddenly on the reins, the three horses threw up their heads, champed their bits, stamped their fore feet, and switched their tails, as though impatient to get away.

"Whoa, boys!" said Frank, as though trying to curb them a few moments.

"Now, off with you!" and the steeds dashed away in gallant style, and the magnificent steam Tally-Ho went speeding across the level country at a terrific speed.

"Whoop—whoop!" yelled Barney and Pomp, springing to their feet and swinging their hats above their heads.

The crowd at the station yelled back, but they were not heard.

Soon the little station faded away in the distance, and the Tally-Ho went on careering over the boundless prairie as fine a coach as ever rolled on wheels, the four daring spirits ripe and ready for any adventures that might greet them on their journey.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BUFFALO HUNT.

THE reader will remember where we left the young inventor and his friends in the Steam Tally-Ho. They were bounding over the boundless prairie at railroad speed, laughing, talking, and cheering as they flew past a farmhouse, the inmates of which gazed at them in dumfounded amazement.

The steam horses worked admirably together, there being an utter absence of the jars so noticeable in the steam team which had ended its career in the bottom of the great canyon the year before. Everything now was smooth as wax, and the horses seemed to obey the slightest touch of the different cranks as well as the reins.

"Frank," exclaimed Charley, when they had gone some twenty miles or more, "this ought to immortalize you."

"Well, I don't know about that," said Frank, laughing. "If this axle underneath us should suddenly snap it would immortalize all four of us. In less than two minutes there wouldn't be anything mortal left of us."

"Look heah, Marse Frank," asked Pomp, from behind, "am dat axle all right? Kase ef it ain't 'Ise—"

"It's all right up to the present time, Pomp," replied Frank, cheerily.

"Och, be the powers, but we'd thravel fast the ither way av it wasn't," remarked Barney O'Shea.

"I ain't efraid o' nuffin but that axle, I ain't," said Pomp.

"Don't be uneasy about that, Pomp," Charley said. "There is more danger of the horses running away."

"Hole 'em hard, Marse Frank. Dem's bad hosses when dey gits skeered."

Just then a jackass-rabbit sprang up in front of the steam horses and sped away like the wind. He had to move, as the Tally-Ho was about to go over him.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, "wud yez look at 'im now! Bedad, but he's laving us behind!"

Frank tooted one of the steam whistles several times, and crowded on more steam and gave chase.

The whistles gave that jackass-rabbit an idea that all creation was thundering in his wake, and he patted prairie grass as he had never done before. He laid his long ears back and doubled himself up and stretched out at full length again at the rate of about ten times a second.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, springing up on the seat to watch the race, "but the little baste is putting it down!"

"Yah, yah!" cried Pomp, equally excited, "go it, ole cotton-tail, we's comin' too—whoop!"

Half a mile after mile were passed, and still the jackass-rabbit kept ahead.

"They can outrun any other animal in the world," said Charley.

"Yes—except a steam horse," replied Frank.

"Oh, our team is too long-winded for him." Frank saw that the rabbit was growing weaker. He suddenly blew both whistles at once.

That gave the poor thing such a terrible fright that he leaped about six or eight feet in the air and fell dead, never moving again.

"Poor fellow!" said Charley, "that ends life with him."

The Steam Tally-Ho passed over him and went thundering on its way in a southwesterly direction, going in a straight line from the railroad.

Farms now became scarce. As far as the eye could reach in front of them the prairie stretched out till it met the sky.

"This is glorious!" exclaimed Charley. "It makes my blood leap through my veins. This is just what I wanted to throw new life into me!"

"Yes," assented Frank. "This beats the Steam Team. It's faster and rides easier, and will wear longer. This is a new route now."

"The finest part of the country, too," said Charley; "though the robbers and Indians have made it too uncomfortable for settlers."

"Is that so? I didn't know we were in that part of the country," said Frank, in some surprise.

"Why, yes—look around you. Not a farmhouse in sight. We've come more than one hundred miles since we left the station," and Charley looked at his watch to note the time.

"Bedad, but I see the loikes av a buffalo!" exclaimed Barney, looking away on the left.

"Where?" cried Frank and Charley at once.

"Would yer look at that," said Barney, pointing to several dark moving objects away cut on the left.

"Buffalo, by George!" cried Charley, in great delight. "Turn to the left, Frank, and give us a shot at them."

Frank drew the reins gently, and the leader turned a beautiful curve, the Tally-Ho following gracefully as ever a coach followed trained horses, and in another minute they were bearing down on the buffaloes.

They were several miles away, but miles were of little moment to our heroes. The gallant Tally-Ho could reel them off like an express train.

But before they caught up with the buffaloes, the great shaggy beasts took the alarm and bounded away with all the speed they could put into their heels.

"Now, give 'em a run for it, Frank!" cried Charley, getting up and opening the arm-chest

for a rifle. Barney and Pomp took one each also. They were Winchester rifles of the finest make and finish, carrying sixteen charges at a time.

"Halloo!" cried Frank, as he espied a dark object on the ground on the right. "What's that out there?"

Charley stood up on the seat, and gazed in the direction indicated.

"Take that spy-glass in there and see what it is," said Frank, slacking up somewhat.

Charley got the glass, and turned it on the object in the distance.

"Why, it's a wounded buffalo surrounded by coyotes!" he cried.

"That settles it!" said Frank, turning the Tally-Ho in that direction. "We'll let that buffalo die in peace if we have to kill every cussed coyote on the plains. Get your rifles ready and make every shot count."

The Tally-Ho rattled on toward the wounded buffalo. The great beast made desperate efforts to get up and move away, but he was too near his latter end to do so. Some hunter had given him a wound that was doing its work. He was dying, and the two score hungry coyotes around him were trying to worry him to a speedy death.

When within good rifle-shot distance of the pack, Frank halted the Tally-Ho and said:

"Now give it to him, boys!"

Bang—bang—bang! went the three rifles, almost as one piece, and three coyotes rolled over on the grass with bullet holes clean through them.

The rest scattered.

The coyote can run about as fast as the jackass-rabbit, and the time some of them made after the first volley made Pomp grin from ear to ear.

"Jes look at dem wild dogs!" he chuckled. "Dey's gwine home to dere mudders—he—he—he!"

"Begob, there's one as won't be after seeing his mither!" exclaimed Barney, aiming at one who was going off at the rate of a mile a minute.

The bullet went through the beast, but he was going so fast that he went a hundred yards or more before he knew he was hit. Then he gave a yelp and rolled over.

His companions kept on, and the Tally-Ho gave chase to the pack for ten minutes, Pomp, Barney, and Charley picking off a number of them.

"Now for that buffalo out there," said Charley. "That wounded fellow won't be troubled any more for twenty-four hours."

Frank then gave chase to a huge bull buffalo, some three miles away. He was making for timber, which could now be seen in the dim distance.

"We must get him before he reaches that timber," said Charley.

"We can do that," replied Frank; and putting on more steam, the three iron steeds dashed away as though great stakes were up for the race.

Steadily they gained on the monster until they were in good rifle-shot distance from him.

"Get alongside of him, Frank," urged Charley. "I want to get a side shot at him."

"Steady, boys!" said Frank to his iron horses, as he put on even more steam, and the Tally-Ho fairly flew over the plains. The bull heard the furious tread of the iron steeds behind him, and redoubled his efforts to outstrip them.

Just as the leader was within some twenty paces of him, Frank blew both whistles. That was too much for the bull. He wheeled to face the terrible enemy, and the Tally-Ho dashed past him at a rattling pace.

Frank stopped some two hundred yards beyond the bull. The enraged beast was glaring at them as though wondering why his pursuer didn't show fight, instead of dashing past him.

Charley raised his rifle, took deliberate aim and fired. The bullet penetrated the bull's eye, and his career on the plains was ended.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST NIGHT ON THE PLAINS.

In a few moments the huge beast was dead. Charley, Pomp and Barney got down from the Tally-Ho and went back to look at him.

He was a huge fellow, one who had, perhaps, been the king bull of the herd for many years, as he had innumerable scars on him, the records of combats with rival bulls in the vast herds that sometimes sweep over the plains.

"If he had stopped just ten feet further to the left," said Frank, as he came up to look at him, "we would have been completely overthrown and everything smashed up."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Charley, thunder-struck. "What do you mean, Frank?"

"Why, just look at him," said Frank, pointing to the dead bull. "When he stopped we shot past him like an arrow. Suppose the leader had struck him with full force?"

"Well?" and Charley looked his cousin full in the face.

"There would have been a terrible accident. We were going at the rate of nearly thirty miles per hour. The leader would have been overthrown, the other two would have piled up on him and we would have been hurled to—"

"De debil!" gasped Pomp, his eyes stretched as wide as saucers.

"Bedad, but a miss is good as a moile," said Barney, who did not care much for danger that is past.

"Yes, but it is well to avoid such risks in the future," said Charley. "We ought not to crowd 'em so close."

"You called out for me to get alongside of it."

"So I did, but I won't do it again," said Charley, laughing.

"Well, he's too old to eat; let's leave him," suggested Frank, leading the way back to the Tally-Ho.

The others followed, and in a few moments were again in their seats and rolling leisurely along toward the timber, which could now be seen ahead of them.

"There's water where that timber is," said Charley, who was as familiar with the plains as an old pioneer.

"Then we'll camp there for the night," said Frank; "for we may want more water before we find it beyond the timber."

"We can find some game there, too," suggested Charley.

They neared the timber, and found that it skirted the banks of a clear stream—a moderate-sized river.

"Just the place we want for a camp," remarked Frank, as he drew up within fifty yards of the river.

They all leaped down and began to look around for a good place to pitch the tent, which they soon found.

Frank opened the Tally-Ho and took out a tent and a complete set of camp utensils, which he handed one by one to Barney and Pomp.

At last he came across one of the shillelahs he had made for Barney.

He handed it to the Irishman, who looked at it with affection, spat in his hand, grasped it in the middle, flourished it above his head, and gave a whoop that awoke the echoes for miles around.

"Whoop!" he yelled again; "send us a ruction, for this illigant shtick is aching with idleness!" and he flourished it so close to Pomp's head that the darkey exclaimed:

"Look out dar, afore yer broke somefing!"

"Whoop! Ould Ireland forever!" yelled Barney, dancing a regular Irish jig as he twirled the stick.

"Well, wait till you get a chance to use it, Barney," said Frank, as he proceeded to hand out more of the contents of the Tally-Ho.

"Sich an illigant shtick it is," cried Barney. "Faith, an I'd make the devil's own head ache wid it!"

"So you could, but let's see how quick you can make a good fire."

"Och, a foire, is it? Bedad, an' I'm the bye as can make it red hot," and sticking the shillelah in his belt alongside of his revolver, the jolly Irishman went to work making a fire. He

soon had a roaring blaze going, while Frank, Charley, and Pomp arranged the tent.

The tent up, the fire going, and everything in readiness to cook supper, Frank opened a chest of provisions.

"Here, let's have some fish for supper," said Charley, producing some tackle from the ammunition chest.

"Bedad, an' I'll ate all yez catch, an' cry for more," said Barney.

"Oh, you shut up, Barney," replied Charley, going down to the river bank, where he overturned a log and secured plenty of bait in the way of grubs.

In the meantime Pomp took a rifle on his shoulder and went up stream a few hundred yards in quest of game. He soon found a deer, who put off with all speed. But no deer could get away from such a marksman as Pomp. He brought the Winchester to bear upon him, and sent three bullets into his body in quick succession, and the poor, timid beast succumbed.

"Yum—yum—yum!" said Pomp, "dat's good steak for supper. Fish ain't nowhar wid deer steak."

He then threw the deer over his shoulders, and carried him back to camp.

"It's an illigant shot yez are, Pomp," said Barney, as Pomp threw the game on the ground by the fire.

"Dat's what de deer said," remarked Pomp, proudly.

"Well, cut some steaks from it, Pomp," ordered Frank; "I've got to look after the horses."

Pomp was butcher, cook, hunter, waiter, or anything else that came to hand. He was handy at everything, and always willing to pitch in and work.

Ere Pomp had the steaks on the fire, Charley returned with nearly a dozen fine perch.

"Oh, this is the life that makes a man feel what he is!" exclaimed Frank, as he came back from the horses and met Charley with the fish.

"Yes; I feel as though I never want to go back to civilization," responded Charley.

Barney took the fish and cleaned them, and in less than a half hour they were feasting on fried perch, venison steak, bread and coffee.

Knowing the team could not run away nor be stolen, Frank and Charley had no uneasiness about the Tally-Ho, so, at an early hour they turned in and went to sleep.

They awoke at daylight to find everything just as they left them. Pomp was up ahead of them, killing prairie hens by the dozen. He prepared, with Barney's help, a dozen for the coals, intending to have them as rations through the day. He was very fond of them, as indeed they all were.

Frank proceeded to get up steam in order to be off by the time the sun began to peep over the plains. He put in a full supply of water—enough to last several days—in order to be prepared for any emergency.

After breakfast they struck tent, passed up everything, and were soon ready to move.

"All aboard!" cried Frank, and all four climbed up to their seats on the Tally-Ho, and in another minute were rushing down the left bank of the river at a rattling pace.

Ten miles below they struck the mail-coach road, which ran almost north and south over 600 miles from Taggart's Station through Indian Territory to the settlement south of them.

"The mail road!" cried Charley, as he saw the clear-cut trail of the heavy stage-coach.

"Yes, and the coach passed here not more than an hour ago," said Frank, as he inspected the wheel-ruts in the road. "I'll overtake them in another hour."

"They are probably just behind that timber in the bend of the river there," remarked Charley, pointing in the direction of the heavy timber in advance of them, where the road ran close to the edge of it.

Sure enough they were, but our heroes were astonished at the sight they beheld on turning the timber.

The mail-coach was surrounded by a gang of outlaws, who were plundering the passengers

and mail bags, after having killed two of the horses and wounded the driver.

"Robbers, by all the saints!" cried Charley, as his quick eye caught the situation.

"Get the rifles out!" ordered Frank.

Pomp, Charley and Barney grasped their Winchester, and wanted to get near enough to open fire.

"Wait till we can tell the robbers from the passengers," said Charley.

"Don't spoil the ruction wid yer guns," exclaimed Barney. "Faith, an' let me get at the blaggards wid me shillelah. Whoop!"

"Be quiet, you wild son of—"

"Whoop!" yelled Barney again, who was nearly beside himself with joy at the prospect of a ruction, as he called it.

The robbers saw the Tally-Ho coming, and didn't know what to make of it. It was coming so fast they thought the horses were actually running away with it.

But when they saw three men on top with guns in their hands, they knew that meant fight, so they prepared to fight and capture the second coach.

Frank slackened the speed of the Tally-Ho.

"Now let 'em have it!" he cried, and the three rifles were leveled at the outlaws.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE BRINK OF DEATH.

ALL three were splendid shots, and when they pulled a trigger something was hit.

"At the first fire three robbers went down, to the great consternation of the band.

"Charge!" the leader yelled, "and give 'em the revolver before they can reload."

They did charge, but were instantly met by another volley, which sent three more to the ground in the agonies of death.

Another, boys!" cried Frank, and another did the work. Those who survived it turned and sought shelter in the timber. They could not face such a deadly fire as that. The passengers of the mail-coach, among whom were two young ladies going out to join their father, set up shouts of joy at their very unexpected deliverance, and ran forward to meet the Tally-Ho.

But when Frank turned loose both whistles, they sprang back in consternation, and the two remaining horses of the mail coach reared and plunged in the greatest terror. Such things as steam horses they had never dreamed of before, hence the passengers may well have been alarmed.

"Whoa!" cried Frank, reining up alongside the coach. "Are any of you hurt?"

"Only the driver," replied one of the passengers. "But who are you?"

"We are gentlemen and law-abiding citizens," replied Frank, "and tender our assistance in your trouble."

"You have saved us, sir," said the elder of the two young ladies, "from those horrible robbers. One of them took my watch and purse from me, all I had in the world."

"Well, we'll see if they are on any of those we shot down, miss," said Charley, leaping to the ground, followed by Frank, Barney and Pomp.

"Divil take the loikes!" cried Barney. "Noine men kilt an' not a head broken. We spoiled an illegant ruction by using the guns, bad 'cess to 'em."

The passengers aided in searching the bodies of the dead robbers. They were fortunate enough to find the watch and purse of the young lady, and they were restored to her intact.

Some of the mail-bags had been cut open, but the mails were all there, the rascals not having had time to complete their work of villainy.

Ben Homan, the driver, was pretty badly wounded. He was lying on the grass near the mail-bags, one of which had been placed under his head as a sort of pillow.

There were four passengers—two men and the two young ladies.

"Driver," said Frank, leaning over the wounded stage-driver, "can you do any traveling?"

"Yes, I think I can," was the reply. "I can be no worse than lying here to be finished if I am left."

"Well, we ain't the kind that leave men behind to be murdered. We'll carry you through on our Steam Tally-Ho."

"Steam Tally-Ho!" exclaimed the passengers, in amazement.

"Yes, we run our horses by steam," replied Frank. "Bullets don't have any effect on them. They can keep up at twenty-five miles an hour all day and all the week."

"Who in the world invented such a thing as that?" Ben Homan asked, rising on his elbow and gazing at the splendid Tally-Ho Team.

"I got it up myself. Come, now, we must get away from here," and with the assistance of Barney and one of the passengers he placed Homan on the mail-bags, which had been thrown into the Tally-Ho. Then the two young ladies were placed on the middle seat.

"Now, Charley, you and Barney and the other passengers get into the other stage, and follow; the two horses can bring you through."

"But you won't leave us?"

"Of course not."

They soon moved off, and in a few minutes were out of sight of the dead robbers.

That night they reached a relay house.

The driver was growing worse from his wound. No surgeon was nearer than the terminus of the line, more than 300 miles south of that point.

"He will die unless we get him to a physician," said Charley, shaking his head.

"Then we'll get him to one before morning, or by morning," said Frank.

"How will you do it?" the keeper of the relay house asked.

"Take him through on the Tally-Ho," was the prompt reply.

Homan said he could stand the trip. The two young ladies said they would go with them and nurse him through.

But the two male passengers had to remain behind, and wait till a team could be made up for them, much to their disgust.

"It's a good road, is it, Homan?" Frank asked the wounded driver.

"Yes—level or gently rolling all the way," he replied.

"Very well. We'll pull you through three days ahead of time. All aboard!"

They had eaten a hearty supper, and were now prepared for an all night's ride.

The Tally-Ho started off at a rattling pace, and in five minutes the relay station was out of sight.

When it grew dark Frank turned on the electric lights, which shone through the glass eyes of the iron steeds, illuminating the plains for a quarter of a mile ahead of them.

The young ladies were unbounded in their expressions of admiration, and never tired of asking questions.

All through the long night the Tally-Ho flew along over the smooth prairie land, and just as the gray dawn began to illumine the eastern horizon they came in sight of Wyandotte, the end of the stage line.

They rattled up in front of the stage office and halloosed.

The postmaster was astonished when he was called up and told that the mail was in three days ahead of time.

"How did it get here?" he asked.

"Faith, we brought it, yer gosssoon," replied Barney.

"How did you bring it?"

"Arrah now, yez haven't any eyes in yer head, have ye? Sure, an' the Stame Tally-Ho brought it, good cess to the same."

Of course the arrival of the steam Tally-Ho created the most profound sensation in the inland town, and everybody crowded around to see it and ask questions.

But the postmaster was a man of business. He placed Homan in charge of the only physician in the place, and immediately contracted with Frank to carry the mails back to the railroad, with advices to the government about the attack on the stage.

"When can you be off?" he asked.

"In an hour, if necessary."

"Very well. I shall have the mail ready in two hours."

Frank and Charley busied themselves in examining the steam steeds, giving the boilers water, fuel, etc., etc., and in less than two hours were in front of the stage office receiving the mails.

They left amid the cheers of the crowd, and in a few minutes the town of Wyandotte lay in the distance behind them.

We will not stop to describe the incidents of the trip, save to remark that the robbers saw them as they passed, and recognized the Tally-Ho as the same coach that drove them off when they had the other in their power.

They resolved to lay for its return, and settle forever the question as to the supremacy of the road; and for that purpose mustered their full strength, and awaited their return.

The Tally-Ho carried the mail through in two days, a distance of 600 miles, and started back in five hours with the return mail, refusing to take any passengers for the trip, as they preferred their own crowd to any one else.

When they reached the river near where they encamped the night before they discovered the stage-robbers they halted, and concluded to have another old-fashioned camp supper.

The supper was soon cooked and eaten, and they were about to take up the camp utensils, when they heard a rush of horses in the open prairie back of them. Looking around, they were astounded at seeing half a hundred armed horsemen charging down upon them at headlong speed.

"Quick, boys!" cried Frank, springing up on his seat, and gathering up the reins.

Charley, Barney and Pomp lost no time in crowding up on the Tally-Ho.

"All aboard?" Frank asked, in very hurried tones.

"Yes," said Charley. "Lie down—they are going to fire!"

They barely had time to throw themselves flat on their seats, when a volley burst from the outlaws, and a shower of bullets rattled against the iron sides of the Tally-Ho.

"Now, off with you!" said Charley. "Don't wait to shoot—too many of yonder devils!"

"Bang—bang—bang!" came more shots.

Charley's hat was pierced by a bullet; Frank lost a lock of hair, and Pomp's nose was grazed by another.

Down inside—quick!" cried Frank, touching the secret spring that caused them to disappear into the body of the Tally-Ho, and the top to close over them, completely shutting them up as in a box.

By this time the outlaws were all around the Tally-Ho, yelling like so many wild Comanches.

"Surrender!" yelled their leader, "or you'll all be killed!"

Frank said not a word, but used the levers inside to guide the three gallant steam horses.

They started off on a run, turning square off from the road and going directly from the river.

With frantic yells, the outlaws followed at full speed.

"Howly Moses! we are afther running away from as foine a ruction as iver blist the oies o' man!" groaned Barney O'Shea, as the Tally-Ho rattled away, with the yelling outlaws behind her.

The night was very dark; but the electric lights from the eyes of the horses enabled Frank to see the ground some two or three hundred feet in front of him. Yet he dared not go faster than the outlaws could ride. His hope was that their horses would soon give out and lag behind. He could see them through the rifle-holes in the rear of the Tally-Ho.

Suddenly he gasped:

"My God!" and grasped the lever, that brought the Tally-Ho to a full stop on the brink of an immense chasm. The leader was within a few feet of the brink. It was dark and yawning.

"Lord! what a narrow escape!" he exclaimed.

"What is it?" Charley asked.

"A chasm!"

"Then we must fight here."

"Yes—get your rifles ready."

The outlaws came yelling around the Tally-Ho like so many wild beasts. They knew the chasm was there, and believed the Tally-Ho and the United States mails were all their own. Volley after volley were fired at the Tally-Ho. The bullets flattened against it, and fell harmless to the ground.

"Wait till I turn the lights on them," said Frank, "and then you can give 'em a volley that will tell—now!"

By a secret lever known only to himself, Frank turned the horses' heads slowly around, as though they were trying to look at their tormentors, throwing powerful electric lights full upon the outlaws. The other three ran out their deadly Winchesters, and poured a withering volley into their ranks, mowing them down like grass before the reaper.

A yell of rage burst from them which Barney answered with:

"Come on, ye devils! Whoop! Ireland forever!"

"It's iron, boys!" cried the outlaw leader; "let's push it over into the chasm—come on, all in a body—every man do his best—now!"

The daring outlaws rushed in a body to push the team over into the dark yawning chasm, maddened by the withering fire the gallant young inventor and his friends were pouring upon them.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIGHT AND CAPTURE.

THE outlaws swarmed around and pushed against the Tally-Ho with loud hurrahs. They succeeded in moving it a little, but the iron horses remained as though they had taken root in the ground.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, blazing away with his Winchester rifle till there was not a charge left in it. "Ate that, an' tell me if yez loike it!"

Frank made the horses back, and the next moment the Tally-Ho made a backward rush, crushing the life out of two of the wretches.

"Grind them ter powder, the devils!" roared Barney. "Och, let me get at 'em, an' by the powers I'll break the heads of every mither's son av thim. Whoop!"

"Oh, golly, ain't it hot? Look out dar," cried Pomp. "I's shootin' at yer, honey!" and he brought down an outlaw at almost every shot.

"Turn it over, men!" cried the outlaw chief; "turn it over so they can't get away; all at once—now!"

But the terrible fire, now from six revolvers—the three inside holding a revolver in each hand—was too much for the outlaws. They broke and fled out of range, and left their dead and dying all around the Tally-Ho.

"There they go, running away like sheep!" cried Charley, and almost beside himself with delight.

"Let 'em go," said Frank; "they are a bad crowd."

"Oh, mother o' Moses!" moaned Barney O'Shea, "will I niver have a fight loike a dacent Christian? Come back, ye blaggards, till I bate the loife out av yez!"

"Oh, stop your noise, and be thankful that you are alive with a whole skin," said Charley to the impatient Irishman.

"Bedad, I'd lave 'em me skin if they would pitch in and give us an illegant ruction loike we have 'em in ould Ireland," replied Barney, in a tone of sadness, as he saw the outlaws fast disappearing in the darkness.

"I think we had better follow them up in the darkness awhile and give 'em a scare they will remember," suggested Frank.

"It would be a good idea. If we could get them within range of the lights again we may pick off a few of them."

Frank turned the Tally-Ho around and dashed away toward the river again. In a few minutes some of them were in sight again, and Pomp and Barney opened fire on them.

They were utterly demoralized, and broke in all directions. One's horse was shot from un-

der him, and he fell upon his knees in an attitude of supplication.

"Oh, for the love av God, shtop!" cried Barney O'Shea. "Let me get at the hathin an' tache him how to pray! Bedad, but I tache him a lesson for his loife, the blaggard!"

"Hold up, Frank, and let Barney get out," said Charley, thinking to see the Irishman back out when the opportunity came.

"Whoa!" and Frank reined up the team.

The next moment the top opened, and the seats arose to their places.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, making a flying leap to the ground. "Ould Ireland to the rescue! Shtand up, ye blaggard, till I bate yer head off av ye—whoop!" and under the glare of the electric light from the leader of the horses, Barney danced around the dumfounded outlaw like a crazy bog-trotter.

"I surrender!" said the outlaw.

"Divil a surrendher kin yez get till ye foight for it, ye blaggard!" cried Barney. "Faith, I'll surrendher to ye av ye will give me an illegant ould-toime ruction. Whoop!" and with that he gave the man a rap on the head that made it ring, and caused him to stagger like a drunken man.

"I surrender!" the man cried again.

"Divil a surrendher till ye foight for it!" roared Barney. "Whoop! Erin go Bragh!" and he gave him another tap on the head.

"By the great snakes!" cried the outlaw, "if I am to be killed, I'll make it lively for you!" and with that he drew a revolver and fired at Barney's head.

"My God!" exclaimed Charley. "The Irishman is dead for a fool!"

But to the surprise of every-one the bullet missed. The outlaw's aim was bad because his head was ringing with the tap from the shillelah in Barney's hand.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney. "Shoot me, will ye! Take that, ye dirty blaggard—an' that! Whoop!"

The outlaw fired twice more, but Barney rained blows on his head till he went to the grass, utterly unconscious.

"Arrah, me darlint!" said Barney, actually kissing the shillelah, "yez are the bye for Barney O'Shea. Faith, an' it's meself that knows how to bate 'em. Whoop!" and he fairly danced a real old Irish jig around the prostrate outlaw.

"Take that revolver away from him, you thick-headed fool!" cried Charley, "before he gets up and puts a bullet through you!"

"Bedad, but it's a bullet I'll put through him wid me shillelah!" replied Barney.

"I surrender!" cried the outlaw again, his face, head and neck covered with blood.

"Shtand up an' foight for it, thim!" cried Barney, spitting on his hand and seizing his shillelah again. "Divil a wan will yez get till yez foight for it. Shtand up, ye blaggard, till I bate yer head off av yer shoulders."

"That'll do, Barney. Tie his hands behind him," said Frank, after seeing that the man was really weak from the loss of blood.

"By the piper as played afore Moses!" exclaimed Barney, "don't shpooil me ruction wid the blaggard, Masther Frank. Wait till I give him anither whack for ould Ireland!"

Charley leaped to the ground just in time to keep Barney from breaking the prisoner's head with his shillelah.

"That'll do, Barney," he said; "let's tie him up and catch another one."

"Whoop! show me the dirty blaggards!"

Pomp came down with cords, and in a few minutes they had the prisoner tied securely, and placed inside the Tally-Ho, where he was as safe as though behind the bars of a dungeon.

"Now, away for the road, Frank!"

"Get up there, you darlings!" cried Frank, and the obedient steeds pranced along toward the river till they struck the stage-road again.

"Ah, here it is!" cried Charley. "Now we can push on for Wyandotte as fast as we please," and they did. The Tally-Ho went like a railroad locomotive, for they knew the road and were not afraid of it.

Steam never tires. Neither do steam horses, and so the Tally-Ho pushed on at the rate of twenty-five miles per hour all through the night,

the steady electric lights showing the way with infallible accuracy.

They did not reach Wyandotte till high noon the next day, so long did the fight with the outlaws detain them.

But their return filled the people with amazement. Such traveling as that seemed incredible. The story of the fight with the outlaws seemed like a romance to them. They saw and counted over one hundred bullet marks on the Tally-Ho and steam horses.

When they saw the prisoner they had brought in, some of them recognized him as a bad character from New Mexico, and the proposition to lynch him found no opposition, save from Barney O'Shea.

"By the powers!" he exclaimed, "give him a shillelah an' let him foight wid me for his loife. Och, I'm a broth av a bye from Ireland, an' kin bate the head off av the blaggard!"

But they would not agree to let the rollicking Irishman have the fun of putting the mail robber out of the way. In that extreme border town, six hundred miles away from any railroad, the citizens desired to put themselves on record against the outlaws of that section.

A meeting was called as soon as they heard the story of the prisoner's connection with the mail robbers, and Frank, Charley, Barney and Pomp gave their testimony against him. He made no defense, knowing it to be useless, only begging that they would shoot instead of hang him.

His prayer was not heeded, however, and he was condemned, taken out and hung by as orderly a mob as ever carried out a verdict of Judge Lynch's court.

"Charley," said Frank, as they came away from the hanging, "I am utterly worn out for want of sleep."

"So am I."

"Begorra!" exclaimed Barney, "wan side av me is aslape now," and he did look sleepy enough.

"Then let's all go to the hotel and—no; you three go, and I'll sleep in the Tally-Ho. We must have sleep."

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW ROUTE—FORDING A RIVER.

FRANK went to the Tally-Ho and got inside of it and disposed himself for a long nap. He had lost nearly two nights' sleep, and felt very weary. The others were equally as bad off, and were soon slumbering away at the hotel.

Of course a crowd were around the Tally-Ho all day long, but they made little noise, knowing that the young inventor of the wonderful coach was asleep inside of it.

All that afternoon and night the sleepers remained in the land of dreams, coming forth the next morning refreshed and ready for any adventure that might come to hand.

"Mr. Reade," said the postmaster, when he met the young inventor again, "would you take a contract to convey the mails for the government?"

"Well, perhaps I would," replied Frank, "if the route was one that would pay. It wouldn't pay me to run this six hundred mile route, though, for it's too small."

"Yet this route pays the contractor \$10,000 a year, and he keeps over a hundred horses and four stages going."

"The deuce he does!" bluntly exclaimed Frank.

"Yes—and you can run it with no horses to feed nor relay houses to keep up. Besides, you can make the trip in two days, whereas it now takes seven days to make the six hundred miles."

The postmaster owned a fourth of Wyandotte, and was anxious to get the steam Tally-Ho on the route, believing it would build up the town rapidly and protect the mails.

"Well, I'll think about it," said Frank, as he turned away.

"But hold on," said the postmaster; "you could take the route four hundred miles south of here, which would give you one thousand miles of route. That would make your fortune in two or three years, aa," here the postmaster

put his hand to his mouth, and whispered, "there's millions in it!"

"Millions!"

"Well, I mean thousands," said the postmaster, correcting his statement.

"How can I get the contract?"

"The present contract expires this month," whispered the postmaster. "My partner in speculations is the member of Congress from this part of the world. You can understand enough from that."

"But wouldn't it throw a good many men out of employment?"

"It would throw some out, of course," admitted the postmaster; "but men have always had to give way to improvements, you know. The Pacific Railroad broke up Ben Halliday's stage route. Your steam stage will drive out the old-fashioned horse stage in a level country like this."

"That's true. Get the contract and I'll take it."

"Very well; give us your hand on that, pard!" and the delighted postmaster grasped the young inventor's hand and shook it warmly.

"One of the old coaches will come in, and will go out again to-morrow," he said. "The one on the other route south of here is now three days behind. I guess the Indians have gotten away with it, though Joe Bledsoe is as brave a man as ever pulled a rein. The Comanches have been growing troublesome all along the line lately, and I guess they've captured Joe's stage. Now, can't you take the mail for Santa Fe to—"

"Santa Fe?"

"Ah, I don't mean for you to go clear through to Santa Fe," replied the postmaster; "only to Devil's Hole, where that route connects with the Santa Fe stage."

"How far is it to Devil's Hole?" Frank asked.

"Four hundred miles."

"Good road?"

"Yes, splendid; even in the hills the road winds around their base on good level ground."

"I'll go."

"Shake—I like your pluck."

They shook hands again.

"You'll have to fight, in all probability," remarked the postmaster.

"So much the better," laughed Frank. "We like a little spice of danger," and Frank went out to tell Charley of the new trip he had on hand.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney. "I'll have a whack at the red blaggards now, begorra."

"Yes, and they may get their fingers in your hair, too, you fool," said Charley.

"Divil a wan av thim kin take me sculp!" he replied. "Bedad, I'd break ther red heads av thim."

"Who ever heard of a red-headed Indian?" remarked Charley, laughing.

"Begorra, wait till I give 'em a whack wid me shillelah," said Barney, spitting in his hand and grasping his national weapon, "and I'll make him red all over."

"He's got you there, Charley," laughed Frank, as they went back to the Tally-Ho to get up steam. They examined every part of the machinery and saw that nothing was out of order. In an hour they were ready to start, and drove around to the stage-office for the mails and final instructions.

These they soon received.

Several men volunteered to go along to help fight, in case of attack by the Indians.

"We are much obliged to you, gentlemen," said Frank, "but we have all the help we need. We don't fear all the Indians in the West."

Everything being in readiness, Frank gathered up the reins and sang out:

"G'long there!" and the gallant steeds sprang away like a whirlwind, followed by the cheers of the crowd around the stage-office.

They were soon on the level plains south of Wyandotte, bounding in a south-westerly direction at a rattling pace. In a couple of hours they were beyond the line of settlement, and the country seemed more wild than any they had yet seen. A low range of hills were seen in the distance on the right. But they followed

the beaten track of the stages, and pushed on for hours without anything to vary the monotony of the trip. At last they espied a belt of timber in advance of them.

"That means a stream of some kind," said Charley.

"And no bridge, either," added Frank.

"Of course not. We'll have to ford it if we cross at all."

"Well, I'll be pretty certain of the depth and the character of the bottom before I drive into it," Frank said with a very determined manner.

"Yes—that's easily done."

When they reached the timber they found a river there which was quite broad, and they noticed that the stage-road ran down into it and came out on the other side.

"These horses can't swim," said Frank, halting the team, and looking at the rolling river before him.

"It can't be very deep," remarked Charley.

"Well, we must find out about that. Who'll wade across?"

"I will, begorra," said Barney, leaping to the ground.

"I'm dar, too," said Pomp, who had a duck's fondness for water.

"Well, wade in and see how deep it is."

They both stripped and went in. The water was quite cold, and as clear as crystal. In no place did they find it waist deep. They landed on the other side, and then returned to report.

"How is the bottom?" Frank asked.

"Hard sand," they both replied.

"All right; get up to your places."

Barney and Pomp dressed themselves and remounted, and the Tally-Ho went boldly into the stream.

The iron horses went through as natural as life, and when they climbed the opposite bank Frank pulled the whistle-valve and awoke the echoes for miles.

"How's that?" exclaimed Charley, in enthusiastic admiration of the feat.

"Begorra, I belave they can shwim up strame, the darlints."

"Ob course, dey kin," said Pomp; "dem hosses ain't no slouches, dey ain't."

"This seems to be a good road ahead of us here," remarked Frank, starting off at a brisk pace. "We must contrive to get through that range of hills before night sets in, as the Indians may lie in ambush for us somewhere there."

"We must keep our eyes open."

"Can't see much in the dark."

"True;" but we can throw the lights around pretty lively."

Miles upon miles were passed, and they entered the hills, where the road wound in and out among them, seeking the level places at their bases.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NIGHT ATTACK.

WHEN they were some four or five miles advanced among the hills, they suddenly came to a place where there had been a fire in the middle of the road.

There were also a heap of bones on the ground about the place.

"By the Lord Harry!" exclaimed Charley Gorse, "there's the remains of Joe Bledsoe's stage!"

"Are you sure?" cried Frank, suddenly reining up the horses.

"Yes; can't you see the tires and other iron works of the stage among the ashes? Look at those bones there, picked clean by the coyotes! Horses and men. They killed two of the horses to stop the stage. Oh, how I could burn the fiends!"

"Be the powers, I could bate the head off av ther whole tribe, the red hathins!" exclaimed Barney O'Shea, the hot Irish blood mantling his cheeks.

They dismounted and examined the remains. Only two human beings had been killed. They could tell that from the bones they found in the heap.

"Well, let's go and keep a good watch for them."

They remounted. The sun was just sinking behind the hills.

"Frank, when it grows darker I think we had better get inside and drive by the aid of the electric lights; for if they were to fire on us from an ambush, they'd riddle us with bullets before we could say Jack Robinson."

"Well, we may as well get inside now. I can see as well to drive that way as any other, though I don't like to go so fast."

"All right; though we don't go fast in these hills, anyway;" and in a few minutes they were all inside the Tally-Ho, leaving it, to all appearances, without a driver or passenger.

The horses trotted along, turning around the base of the hills as gracefully as the best trained horses could do, keeping up a steady pace of about ten miles an hour.

Soon it became dark, and the hills cast somber shadows over the winding road.

Touching the electric wire, the six lights in the eyes of the steam horses were in full blaze in a flash, lighting up the road as bright as day, rendering the scene both weird and picturesque.

Frank kept his eyes steadily on the road in front of him, for in some places it was both narrow and dangerous, where a mistake would have sent them rolling down a precipice of one or two hundred feet.

As the night advanced it grew darker, but that made little difference with them. The electric light showed the way plainly.

Suddenly they saw, or at least Frank did, several Indians mounted on horseback in the middle of the road staring in dumfounded amazement at the strange vehicle approaching them.

They seemed to be on the watch for the stage, and seeing the Tally-Ho's strange lights approaching them, they wheeled and fled as fast as their horses could carry them.

"Boys," whispered Frank, "keep perfectly quiet. I saw a band of red devils in front just now. We'll hear from them soon. Just wait till I give orders, and then we'll have some fun."

"Begorra, it's the fun I'm afther," whispered Barney O'Shea.

"Well, we'll have it at the right time."

Frank slackened his speed to five miles an hour, and kept a watch.

He knew the Indians had gone ahead to prepare an ambush.

Two miles further on they struck the ambush.

A volley of at least two score rifles greeted the horses and Tally-Ho, the leaden hail rattling on the wrought-iron of both with harmless effect.

"Keep quiet," whispered Frank, keeping the Tally-Ho going at a moderate trot along the road, to the astonishment of the Indians.

They were amazed that not a horse shied at the fire, neither did they quicken their speed in the least.

They poured another volley into the iron horses, yelling like so many untamed devils at the same time.

Still the horses trotted leisurely along, as though nothing had occurred to disturb the stillness of the hour.

The superstitious red-men began to think something was wrong. But there were evidently white men among them, painted up as savages, for they soon ran forward and seized the bits of the horses and endeavored to check them.

They might as well have tried to stop a locomotive. The iron steeds threw up their heads and shook loose the red devils.

Some climbed upon their backs and struck with their tomahawks. Others climbed on top crowding up as many as could find sitting room, yelling like demons the while, and tugging at the reins in a vain endeavor to stop the Tally-Ho.

"Oh, mither o' Moses!" groaned Barney O'Shea; "that I should iver live to see the red nagurs on top av the Tally-Ho!"

"Now let 'em have it!" cried Frank, suddenly

turning the whistle valve and giving forth shrieks that froze the blood of the savages with terror. At the same time, Barney, Pomp and Charley put the muzzles of their revolvers through the adjustable holes on top of the Tally-Ho, and opened fire.

Never were Indians more astonished.

They fell off, rolled off, jumped, and some went off never to get up again. Had a thousand hornets been turned loose on them, they could not have displayed more activity than they did.

They shrieked, screamed and howled till the hills re-echoed a pandemonium of fiendish sounds.

"Ha-ha-ha!" chuckled Frank, softly; "that fetched 'em. Just keep still and see how it will work. They don't understand this thing at all."

A continuous fire was kept up on the Tally-Ho for several miles. Every time an Indian came in range of the electric light, Barney or Pomp or Charley put a bullet through him, until at last they seemed to think this new kind of a stage was too much for them. Yet they followed it mile after mile, firing at it till there was not an inch surface on the back part of the Tally-Ho that had not been struck by a bullet.

They were loath to give up a prize they had considered all their own; but they finally did, and the Tally-Ho swept through the hills in triumphant safety, reaching the plains on the other side just as the gray streaks of dawn began to illumine the east.

"Now for a fast run!" cried Frank, suddenly opening the top of the Tally-Ho and scrambling to his seat; "g'lang, you racers—whoop!"

CHAPTER X.

BARNEY O'SHEA'S FIGHT WITH A RED-SKIN.

OVER the level stretch of country the Steam Tally-Ho flew like a chariot drawn by winged steeds. The four daring men who had spent the night in the narrow compass of the Tally-Ho were glad to get out on the seats once more and breathe the fresh morning air.

"The morning air is sweet," said Frank.

"Indade it is," replied Barney, "an' it 'moids me av ould Ireland, bedad!"

"What does?"

"The frish air, begorra!"

"Oh!" and Charley winked at Frank, as much as to say: "He just saved himself, didn't he?"

Frank was looking at the horses as they flew along over the level country. They were spotted all over, where the leaden bullets had flattened against them.

"Just look at those bullet-marks," he said, after a minute or two of silence. "Those red devils must have fired a thousand shots at us last night."

"An' divil a wan av us is hurted," said Barney.

"No—and that is more than some of them can say."

"Arrah, now, could I have given 'em a taste av me shlick, bedad, they'd all be dead, wid not a whole head on 'em, the hathins."

"Why, you fool, they'd have riddled you with bullets," said Charley.

"Divil a wan," persisted Barney; "they don't hurt O'Sheas that way, begorra."

"Well, don't you try that on a whole band of red-skins at once. They are too many for you."

"Look dar—dere's more ob dem red debils!" cried Pomp, pointing off to the right about a couple of miles to a party of some twenty or more Indians on horseback.

Just then the Indians seemed to have discovered the stage, as they evidently took the Tally-Ho to be, and at once made for it, urging their horses to the top of their speed.

"Down inside again!" cried Frank, and in a another moment all four of them were down in the body of the Tally-Ho, safe from any bullets that might come from the red-skins.

Frank slackened the speed of the steam horses to a gentle trot. When the Indians came up they were astonished at not seeing anybody in the driver's seat. They rode all around it, peering curiously at it. Then the

horses suddenly attracted attention. They crowded as close to them as they dared. Such horses they had never seen before.

Suddenly Frank turned the whistle-valve, and each whistle gave an ear-piercing shriek.

Such a scattering! The Indians were as badly frightened as their horses.

Some of them ran nearly a mile before they stopped.

But they had not made any hostile demonstrations, hence Frank would not allow any one to fire on them.

"Here they come again," said Charley.

"Well, let 'em come. We can afford to let 'em satisfy their curiosity."

"By the great blue crane!" cried Charley, "they are going to fire."

"Let 'em fire."

"Bang!" came a volley from the savages, every gun of which was aimed at the steam horses.

The whistles again blew, and then Frank turned the Tally-Ho in pursuit of them.

Of course they fled. Horses that bullets could not hurt were to be feared, so they put off in a body as fast as they could ride.

"On out your seats!" cried Frank, "and pick 'em off. I'll keep you in range."

"Whoop!" cried Barney O'Shea. "The red devils 'll never see home agen!" and with that the three deadly Winchester rifles began to play upon the red Bedouins of the plains.

Crack—crack—crack! they went, and down went a savage at every shot.

Dismayed and panic-stricken, the red rascals threw themselves on the sides of their horses, one foot holding to the crupper and an arm over the neck. By this means only an arm and a foot were exposed, which no marksman could hit while the horse was in full speed.

"Bedad, but I belave they've crawled into their hosses!" exclaimed Barney.

"No, they are behind 'em. Shoot the hosses!"

Pomp brought down a horse, and an Indian promptly concealed himself behind him. Charley did likewise, only he got his Indian before he could get out of range.

Barney brought down a horse, and failed to get a shot at the savage.

"Whoop!" he yelled, laying down his gun and making a flying leap from the top of the Tally-Ho, while it was going at the rate of at least fifteen miles per hour.

"Great Heaven!" gasped Frank, as he saw the foolhardy Irishman strike the ground and roll nearly fifty feet from the impetus of the speed at which they were running. "The fool will break his neck!" and he suddenly brought the Tally-Ho to a stand-still.

Barney pulled himself together after a minute or so, took his shillelah, spat in his hand, and made a rush for the savage behind the horse.

Luckily for him the Indian had not had time to reload his rifle, or that would have been the last of Mr. Barney O'Shea. Neither would he have escaped had the savage carried a revolver. But the red-skin still had his tomahawk and scalping knife.

"Come up, ye red devil, till I bate the head off av ye!" cried Barney, as he went around to the other side and had a full view of the red-skin.

He was an ugly-looking fellow, but Barney never feared anything in human shape when he had a stout shillelah in his hand. Seeing that Barney meant mischief, the savage gave a grunt and sprang to his feet.

"Ugh! me take scalp!"

"Divil a wan! Take that, ye ould spalpeen av a red haythin!" and Barney aimed a blow at the astounded savage that sent him reeling like a drunken man.

"Look out fo' dat hatchet!" yelled Pomp, as the savage recovered and rushed at the daring Irishman, with upraised tomahawk. "Look out dar, I tole yer!"

Barney was on the lookout, and dodged the weapon as it was whirled at his head. The next moment he rained a half dozen blows on the Comanche's head which made him stagger like a reed in the wind.

"Whoop—ould Ireland forever!" yelled Barney, dancing around the disgusted savage like

a Chimpanzee with the itch. "Shtand still till I give ye me best hand!"

And whack went another on the unprotected head of the aborigine.

No Indian ever understood the art of sparing.

They fight with knife and tomahawk, and make short work of it. But here was a pale-face belaboring him with a short stick, making him see more stars than he ever dreamed had existence, and he couldn't touch him with his knife.

"Uge—white man fight like squaw!" he sneered, facing the dancing Irishman again.

"Bedad, thin, an' yez had better sind for yer squaws to do yer foightin'," retorted Barney, "for I'm goin' to bate the loife out av ye. Take that, ye son av a red devil!"

And with that he gave him a whack that sent him to grass in a jiffy.

"Hi-hi-hi!" yelled Pomp, "hit 'im again, Mr. Barney!"

"Look out for your Indian behind that other horse, Pomp!" said Charley warningly.

Pomp had forgotten about the other in the excitement.

He looked, and could see nothing of the other.

"Golly, he's done gone an lef us," he said.

"Get down and look for him, Pomp."

Pomp did, but he carried his Winchester rifle with him, ready to raise and fire at a moment's notice. He found a trail through the grass where the savage had crawled away. He followed some distance, when the red-man suddenly sprang up before him, rifle in hand.

CHAPTER XI.

POMP AND THE INDIAN—A RUCTION IN CAMP.

THE two glared at each other in silence. Pomp had the drop on the red-skin, and the latter dared not move for fear that moment would be his last.

"Drop dat gun," said Pomp.

"Ugh!" grunted the Comanche.

"Drop it, I tole yer."

"Ugh!"

"Ef yer don't drop dat gun you'se a dead Injun, shuah!"

"Wah!"

"De debil!"

"Ugh, wah!" grunted the savage, again making a movement towards Pomp.

"Yer want 'war,' eh! Drap dat gun, I tole yer!" cried Pomp, as the savage advanced.

"Ugh, wah!"

Bang went Pomp's rifle, and the savage gave a death-yell, and fell forward on his face.

Pomp went forward, picked up the dead Indian's rifle and tomahawk, and came away with them.

The other Indian to whom Barney O'Shea was paying his attention was so battered and bruised by Barney's merciless shillelah, that Frank and Charley had to call him away.

"Let him go, Barney," said Frank. "You've given him enough."

"Bedad, an' he hasn't enough whin he has any loife in him yet," replied Barney, flourishing his club over the battered head of the savage. "The dirthy blaggard 'd take me skelp if he could!" and with that he sent him to grass with a whack that made him lie still as a log.

"Beggorra, it's yez neck I hope is broken!" said Barney, as he walked back to the Tally-Ho, which was still waiting for them.

Not a live Indian was anywhere now in sight. The others had made their escape, and had disappeared behind a range of low hills in the distance.

"Pomp," said Charley to the black behind him as the Tally-Ho turned back to find the stage road, "what did you say to that Indian before you shot him?"

"I tole him ter drap dat gun."

"What did he say?"

"He said 'Ugh!' an' I tole him he couldn't skeer me. Drop dat gun, I tole him an' he said: 'Ugh, wah,' an' I tole him I'd gve him war, an' I did!"

Charley and Frank burst into a roar of laughter, to the great astonishment of the black.

"What yer laffin' at, eh?" he asked.

"You fool, that poor devil wanted to surrender and give you his gun."

"De Lor' gorrmighty!" gasped Pomp. "I don't know Injan tork. Him dead as de debil now."

"Niggers don't be afther knowing anything," commented Barney, who was disposed to crow over his ruction with the savage he had so unmercifully pounded with his shillelah.

"Yer ain't nuffin' but a ole tater-eater—yer ain't!" said Pomp, sneeringly.

"Bedad, I kin ate yez head off av yer!" exclaimed Barney.

"Youse can't! Youse ain't man enough, yer crazy Irisher!"

"Faith, I can—whoop!" and whack went the shillelah over Pomp's head, knocking off a patch of wool.

"Hold on, there!" cried Frank, suddenly shutting off steam. "What in thunder do—"

Pomp cut the question short by butting Barney clear off the Tally-Ho, sending him in a heap on the grass below, and knocking pretty much all the breath out of him.

"How yer like dat, eh?" cried Pomp, looking back at the astonished Irishman, pulling himself together again. "Yer don't want'er hit me no mo'."

"Whoop! Come down, yer black spalpeen, till I batther yez—"

"Barney O'Shea," cried Frank, "if you don't apologize, and shake hands with Pomp, I'll drive off and leave you. You insulted him, and then struck the first blow. I won't have it—do you understand?"

"It's laving me, is it?" replied Barney. "Divil take me, but I'll kill all the red nagurs in the worruld!" and the enraged Irishman danced around, flourishing his shillelah, and daring Pomp to come down.

"Ef I come down dar, I'll butt youse innerds outen you!" said Pomp.

"Hush, Pomp!" said Charley. "I say, you infernal ass, are you going with this crowd?"

"Whoop, ould Ireland forever!" roared Barney. "I'm the bye as can bate the whole Tally-Ho—whack!" and he struck one of the horses over the head with the shillelah. The wrought-iron splintered the shillelah all to pieces. With a grimace expressive of disgust, he threw the weapon away, and turned to climb back to his seat.

"Now, you behave yourself, Barney O'Shea," said Frank, "or you'll be kicked out of the crowd. You can get fighting enough without getting up a ruction with Pomp."

Barney said not a word in reply. He was too mad. Irishman like, he felt aggrieved at having been butted off the Tally-Ho by a 'nigger,' which was something he could not endure, particularly as he saw a broad grin on Pomp's face as Frank was lecturing him.

But he soon grew good-natured again, seeing that Pomp bore him no malice.

The old stage road was regained, and the Tally-Ho pushed on for Devil's Hole with great speed.

"Now, Charley," said Frank, "I want you to learn how to run the Tally-Ho, so we can take turns at it. We need sleep, and must have it regularly, or we'll break down. If we have to travel to-night as we did last night, we'd just fall asleep on our seats, and then we'd all go to everlasting smash."

"Yes—that's so," replied Charley. "I guess I can run it now, though I don't know much about the workings inside. I know all about the working of it from the driver's seat."

Charley then took charge and demonstrated that he knew how to run it, after which Frank got down inside and curled up for a nap of sleep.

"Wake me up at noon," he said.

Barney and Pomp both fell asleep in their seats and slept soundly till noon, when Charley halted by the banks of another stream and called them up by yelling loudly:

"Dinner!"

"Good Lor', whar dat dinner!" exclaimed

Pomp, opening wide his eyes and staring around him. "Gimme some 'possum an'—sho, Marse Charley, youse a foolin' us!"

"Pomp, there's a flock of prairie hens out here," he said. "Get your rifle out and we'll soon have something better than 'possum for dinner."

"Better take the shot-gun," suggested Frank, waking up and getting out to his seat.

"Nuffin so good as 'possum an' coon gravy, Marse Charley—oh, yum—yum!"

"Faith, an' I belave it's a coyote ye'd ate next."

"Coyote better meat dan Irish meat," retorted Pomp, as he got down with the shot-gun and went in search of the grouse.

"Barney, you are trying to get up another ruction with Pomp," said Frank, when Pomp was out of hearing, "and when you do, you will leave the Tally-Ho forever. I will drop you right on the spot and leave you to your fate. Put that in your pipe and smoke it."

"Bedad, thin, I won't foight wid him," said Barney.

"You had better not. Pomp is a bad goat with his head when he gets started, and don't you forget it."

The allusion to Pomp's head made Barney feel sick, but he didn't say anything more about it.

In the meantime, Pomp tramped around in the direction of where Charley had seen the covey of grouse go down in the grass, and in a short time he flushed them.

He was a splendid wing-shot, brought down two of the birds.

They flew half a mile and went down in the grass again. Following them up he secured two more. With these he returned to the Tally-Ho, where Barney had a rousing fire ready to cook them.

In order to expedite matters each took a bird and prepared it, and in an incredibly short space of time after they were shot, the birds were quietly packed away in the stomachs of the four hungry men.

CHAPTER XII.

IN DEVIL'S HOLE.

THE meal being ended, Frank took the reins and drove off down the road, which seemed to run parallel to the river for many miles. Of course no road was there save the simple trail of the stage, which made only weekly trips between Wyandotte and Devil's Hole. That was enough for our heroes to see and follow.

Charley went inside and laid down, and in a few minutes he was sleeping soundly, the motion of the Tally-Ho soothing instead of disturbing his slumbers. He slept all the afternoon till quite dark, as did both Pomp and Barney, in their seats, so when the night came on they were all refreshed and ready for any adventure that might turn up.

But the route lay through a dead level, and as far as could be seen nothing was observed to disturb the monotony of the scene.

All through the night the Tally-Ho rolled along, and sunrise brought them again in sight of hills somewhat more abrupt than those in which they had encountered the Indians.

"That looks more pleasant than the plains," said Frank, gazing at the hills in the distance.

"Yes—though we may have to fight our way through them, as we did the first range," said Charley.

"I don't think we will have any more trouble, as we are close to Devil's Hole."

"How know you that?"

"I know we have come pretty close on to four hundred miles, which is the length of the route," was the reply.

"Well, I hope so. Do you know, I am as hungry as a wolf!"

"So am I."

"Begorra, show me a wolf, an' I'll ate him!" said Barney.

"Yum—yum—yum! good, 'possum," said Pomp, licking his chops in anticipation of a good 'possum supper some time before he shuffled off this mortal coil.

"We will see what's behind those hills before

we stop for breakfast," remarked Frank, putting on more steam, and making the horses go like the wind.

The hills were soon reached, and then the speed was slackened. The trail of the stages wound in and out among the hills, and in another hour they came suddenly upon Devil's Hole, a scattered town of several hundred inhabitants.

The people were astonished at seeing such a fancy-looking turnout as the Tally-Ho seemed to be. They did not notice that it was drawn by steam horses at first, till Frank blew the whistles several times. Some of them had heard steam whistles before, but they were astounded at hearing them several hundred miles away from any railroad; hence they made haste to get to the stage office, the place of assembly whenever anything was going on in Devil's Hole.

They came around in open-mouthed wonder, staring like lunatics at the Tally-Ho and her four managers.

"Where's the postmaster?" demanded Frank, as he reined up in front of the stage and post-office.

"Hyar," responded a burly, black-bearded man, with a belt stuck full of revolvers. "What you want?"

"Here's a letter for you," and Frank tossed him a letter the postmaster at Wyandotte had given him.

The postmaster tore open the letter and read it.

"Boys!" he exclaimed, turning to the rough-looking men around him, "Joe Bledsoe has gone under—they cussed red-skins has wiped him out!"

"The deuce!" chorused half a score at once.

"He was three days behind when this stage left Wyandotte," said the postmaster, "an' yer know Joe. That means a wipe out, and this party has got the mail."

"How long did it take yer to make the trip, stranger?" a man asked, turning to Frank.

"Two days," was the reply.

"What!"

"Two days," repeated Frank.

"See hyar, stranger," said the man, laying his hand on his revolver, "yer can lie ter me, an' git away, but if yer ask me ter believe yer, I'll fill yer up with lead, do you hear?"

Frank looked the man in the face and smiled. "You never saw steam horses before, did you?" he asked.

"Steam hosses—thunder, no!"

"Well, just look at those," and Frank led the way toward the horses.

They had been so excited over the news, that the horses had been noticed by but few. They crowded around and felt of them, making such quaint remarks that Frank and Charley enjoyed it hugely.

"These horses never get tired," said Charley.

"How many miles ken they go, stranger?" the first man asked.

"On a good road, twenty-five miles an hour," replied Charley.

"Gosh all —. Stranger, do yer want ter die?"

"Not yet. Do you want to ride?"

"Yes."

"Wait till we deliver the mail, and we'll make your head swim," said Frank.

In ten minutes the mail-bags were delivered to the postmaster, and then the doubting character was taken up on the seat alongside of Frank. There was a level stretch of some three miles down a little valley below the town. Frank turned the horses in that direction and went off like a whirlwind.

In a few minutes they were three miles below the town.

"How far are we now?" Frank asked.

"Three miles, an' I'm a flabbergasted fool, stranger. I ax yer pardin," was the reply.

"Oh, that's all right," and Frank turned and drove back to Devil's Hole even faster than he came. The whole town was out, and received him with wild hurrahs.

He then told the story of poor Bledsoe's fate, and of their terrible fight with the Indians. They examined the bullet-marks on the horses,

and on the Tally-Ho, which they could not doubt.

The day was spent in feasting and drinking. Rough as they were, the people of Devil's Hole were kind-hearted and generous, though they had no mercy on Mexicans or Indians.

The Tally-Ho had to wait two days for the mail to come in from Santa Fe, during which time Frank examined every piece, from the leader to the hind wheels, and put in a supply of fuel and water. Everything was in good condition, notwithstanding the rough usage of the long journey.

On the second day a runner came in and said that Santanda, the Comanche chief, was a few miles below with a party of his braves painted up and on the war-path.

"They are after the Utes," said the post-master.

"But they are red devils, for all that," remarked an old hunter. "Ef yer let 'em get in hyar they'll raise thunder an' ha'r too."

"They are comin' right up the valley," said the runner.

Frank had steam up.

"Who can talk Indian?" he asked.

They laughed at him.

Everybody in Devil's Hole could talk Indian. He selected two good men to go with him and his party.

"We'll take a run down there and meet them," he said, "and tell them to go around another way."

"The deuce!" exclaimed the runner, "there's a hundred of 'em!"

"That doesn't matter—all aboard."

They climbed up, and in a few minutes the Tally-Ho was bounding down the little valley on quite a different mission from the little trip the day before.

CHAPTER XIII.

RUNNING OFF WITH A CHIEF.

THERE was great uneasiness in Devil's Hole that day. The people had heard many exaggerated reports of the numbers of the band of Comanches. Santanda had a bad reputation among the settlers on the border. The whites didn't care to cultivate his acquaintance. On the contrary, they considered his acquaintance very undesirable, for many obvious reasons.

When Frank Reade started down the little valley to meet the intruders, very many of the citizens believed he was going to his death. They also believed that the afternoon would see Santanda and his braves in the town of Devil's Hole.

But they were brave men, who did not propose to let him come in without a very emphatic protest. They armed themselves, and took up a position outside the village where they could settle the matter without endangering the lives of the women and children.

When the Tally-Ho came in sight of the Indians, the latter gazed upon it in amazement. That a fine turnout like that should drive down into their very midst was something really incomprehensible to them.

Frank reduced his speed to a slow trot when he came in sight of them.

"All of you get inside," he said, "and I will drive down where they are, as though nobody but myself had charge. They won't fire on me, as they are not warring against the whites just now. If I see any hostile demonstrations, I will tumble inside and join you."

"Of course you will tell them we can't let 'em come to Devil's Hole?" said the man from that Heavenly place.

"Oh, yes, of course."

They got inside. Only Barney O'Shea protested.

"Bedad, but I'd like ter be outside an' we have a ruction," he said.

"Of course. When they get ready to scalp us, I'll let you out," replied Frank. "If they get such a tough one as yours, they'll probably be satisfied and go back to where they belong."

Barney was in doubt as to whether the proposition was in good faith, and looked quizzically at the young inventor.

"Do you mane it?" he asked.

"Of course I do. Would I jest with a fool?"

"He-he-he!" chuckled Pomp.

Barney turned and gave the grinning black a fierce look, but Pomp pretended to be laughing at something else.

"Begorra, but it's locked up we are, an' the red hathins won't have any fun. Och! it's spoiling for a ruction I am."

"Just wait and you'll see the durndest row you ever saw, stranger," said the man from Devil's Hole.

"Divil a ruction when we're locked like sardines in a box," said Barney.

"Silence in there, now," said Frank, warningly, from his seat on the outside. "We are almost on them."

The Indians, with their ugly chief at their head, waited for the Tally-Ho to come into their very midst.

Frank reined up suddenly with:

"Whoa, boys!" and then turning to the Comanches, inquired: "Where's Santanda?"

"Me Santanda—great chief," replied the chief, riding up alongside the Tally-Ho and giving the young inventor a look intended to impress him with an idea of his greatness.

"Well, you ain't very handsome, I must say," replied Frank, good-naturedly. "Where are you going?"

"Hunt Navajo—take scalp," was the chief's reply, gazing with no little interest at the iron horses.

"Oh, you are, eh! Well, I hope you will kill all the Navajoes and take their scalps, but you must not go through Devil's Hole to do it."

Santanda looked up haughtily at him.

"Santanda great chief," he said. "Him go where he want. Who says not go through Devil's Hole?"

"All the people in Devil's Hole," replied Frank. "They have many very pretty young ladies there, and the men are afraid they will all fall in love with Santanda if they see him."

"De Lor' goshamity!" gasped Pomp. "Dat's de biggest one yit."

"Howly Vargin forgive him!" groaned Barney, "an de loie don't choke him!"

"Will you hush!" exclaimed Charley, in a whisper.

Santanda swelled like a frog at the flattery given him, and said:

"Me great chief. Me got heap squaws. Get more. Me go to Devil's Hole."

"But you must not go," said Frank. "I have come down here to tell you that the people will fight you and your braves if you try to come into Devil's Hole. You can go over the hills and around the town but not through it."

"Ugh! Santanda fight!" exclaimed the chief.

"Me take your scalp an' take horses an' stage, too," and drawing his tomahawk he raised it to strike Frank.

But Frank was on the alert.

He touched the secret spring that regulated the opening at the top of the Tally-Ho, and in another moment he sank out of sight and the top closed again.

Santanda was amazed. He leaped from his horse to the driver's seat and felt all over it for the aperture through which Frank had disappeared. Of course he could find nothing. He was astounded.

But he was well enough acquainted with the white race to know that they were as ingenious as brave, and, therefore suspected a trick. He struck the top of the Tally-Ho with his tomahawk, and gave a whoop that was answered by his whole band.

Frank remained perfectly quiet for some time. The Indians, in order to make a sure capture, ranged themselves on their horses alongside the iron horses of the Tally-Ho, even seizing the bits, as if to hold the metal steeds, should they attempt to run away.

"Now look out for some fun," whispered Frank, touching the steam gauge that connected with the whistles on the steam horses' heads.

Instantly the whistles awoke the echoes for miles around, and the Indian ponies, who had never heard anything like it before, sprang away in mortal terror, spilling more live Indian meat about on the ground than ever before in

their lives. The Indians were themselves as much frightened as were their horses.

Santanda was up on the driver's seat when the whistles shrieked. He was so astonished that he sat like one riveted to the spot, too much frightened to move hand or foot.

"Now we're off," said Frank, and the next instant the Tally-Ho started off down the little valley at a rattling pace.

Santanda sat there like one who was afraid to move. He stared at the gallant steeds of iron as if he were lost in a dream.

He held on for dear life. To jump off would be death, he thought; so he looked back toward his scattered band, and gave a whoop. They answered him, and then began a rapid pursuit, their ponies straining every nerve and muscle to overtake the Tally-Ho.

"Oh, this is fun!" exclaimed Charley, who could see the whole yelling band through one of the adjustable port-holes in the rear of the Tally-Ho.

"Yes, and it's a good joke on the Indians, too," said Frank. "They will follow their leader wherever we carry him. We'll take him about two hundred miles down the country and then drop him."

"But they can't keep up with us far, Frank," said Charley.

"Of course not. They will follow the trail, though."

"Yes—that's so. But what if he jumps off?"

"I'll take him in and see that he does not."

"Bedad, let 'im in now," said Barney, spitting on his hands and rolling up his sleeves. "Faith, I'll make a dacent Christian av him, an' I get me nippers on him, the red blaggard."

"Make room for his tumble, then," said Frank.

Charley and the man from Devil's Hole moved, Frank turned the spring, and Santanda set up a wild yell when he felt his seat giving way and himself going down backwards into the body of the Tally-Ho.

He landed on his back at the bottom, amid the laughter of the five men.

"How are you now, Santanda?" said Frank, extending his hand toward the demoralized Comanche. "Do you still want to fight?"

"Ugh!" he grunted. "Santanda get out and kill all white mans."

He made a desperate effort to butt out the side of the Tally-Ho, but succeeded in nearly butting out what little brains he had. The concussion caused him to drop down half dazed, when he gazed helplessly at the daring young man who had thus captured him in the midst of his whole band of warriors.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RUNNING FIGHT ON THE PLAINS.

"It's no use, old fellow," said Frank, laughingly shaking his head, "you are in for a long ride."

"Ugh! Santanda not go. He great chief—he fight!" cried the ugly red-skin, making a hostile demonstration with his tomahawk.

That was more than Barney O'Shea could stand. He was itching for a chance to pitch into the red-skin. He threw out his great brawny fist against the chief's ear, exclaiming:

"It's foight, is it? Be the powers, it's spooling for a foight I am—whoop!"

The blow landed the chief against the side of the Tally-Ho as limp as a wet rag.

But in a moment or two he recovered, and, being a daring, blood-thirsty desperado, he aimed a blow at Barney with his knife, at the same time giving the war-whoop of his people.

The man from Devil's Hole caught him by the wrist and wrenched the knife from his hand, just as Barney landed another stunning blow on the Comanche's eye.

"Take that, ye blaggard!" he said, "an' tell yer woife I did it. Bedad I'll give yez all a thrate av ye will shtop an' let me bate the hide off av him."

The man from the Devil's Hole took the tomahawk away, saying:

"Indians never give up till they are disarmed."

"Give 'em back," said Barney, "an' let the ould blaggard foight. It's the loife av the parthy, bedad."

"Oh, we don't want to get the whole tribe after us," said the man from Devil's Hole. "The Comanches are the strongest tribe in the West, and the best fighters. We want to give 'em a scare that'll make 'em keep away."

"Begorra, let me bate him thin, an' he'll niver trouble yez agin!"

"Lem me butt 'im, boss!" exclaimed Pomp. "He won't nebber want ter see Debil's Hole agin, I tole yer."

"No, Pomp, the gentleman is right. We can give him a scare he'll not soon forget," and Frank shook his head as he continued to look through the light under the seat and guide the horses as they bounded along over the smooth valley.

The Indian chief recovered from Barney's last blow, and looked for his tomahawk and knife. They were gone, and he remained quiet.

"We are going to carry you dack to your home, Santanda," said Frank. "We don't mean to harm you. We only want you to keep away from Devil's Hole."

"Ugh! Comanches go kill, burn all Devil's Hole," said the sullen chief.

"No, you won't. On the other hand, all the Comanches will get killed if they don't behave themselves," said the man from Devil's Hole, who was a very sensible man after all. "We'll take a thousand teams like this, and run away with your while tribe."

"Ugh! White man heap big talk," said the chief, contemptuously.

"Yes, we're talking now," said Charley, laughing good-naturedly.

"It's time we were getting out on the seats," said Frank, and the top flew open for them.

The man from Devil's Hole and Charley Gorse kept the Comanche chief between them on the middle of the seat; Frank mounted the front seat and started the Tally-Ho flying over the beautiful level at railroad speed.

The stoical Comanche's amazement was unbounded.

"Fast horses," he grunted.

"Yes, go two hundred miles in a day," said Charley, anxious to get him in good humor. "Comanche braves all left behind."

Santanda looked back. The Indians were coming at full speed after the Tally-Ho, but they were many miles behind, scarcely visible to the naked eye.

In another hour they were out of sight altogether. The Tally-Ho also emerged into the great open plain that stretched southward to the region where the Comanche tribe reveled in the freedom of almost illimitable space. The great speed so astonished Santanda that he gazed in wonder at the iron horses, and finally asked:

"Great horses—sell 'em?"

"No—we are going to keep 'em to catch bad Indians with," said Frank, winking at Charley.

"Let's see you catch that deer out yonder, Frank," suggested Charley, pointing toward a deer grazing quietly a mile away on the left.

"Yes—get your rifle ready," replied Frank, turning the Tally-Ho in the direction of the deer.

The timid animal, on hearing the rush of the Tally-Ho, sprang away like the wind, and the Tally-Ho gave chase.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney O'Shea, rising to his feet and peering over at the great iron horses. "Show the red hathin phat yez can do, ye daisies!"

"Jes' look at dat dar deer!" cried Pomp. "Golly, but he kin run like de debil!"

The now thoroughly frightened deer ran for dear life, but the terrible iron horses never tired. They gained on him steadily until the rifle was brought to bear upon him, and he went down with a bullet in the back of his head.

The Tally-Ho stopped, and Pomp got down to secure the prize. He was a fine deer. He was thrown in, and then the Tally-Ho turned in its southerly direction again, without waiting for more game.

Santanda was induced to point out the way

to his village, and long before sunset they were nearing the Comanche country.

Just as the sun was sinking in the west, a band of Comanches was seen coming toward them at full speed.

"Your people, Santanda?" Frank asked, turning to the chief.

"Yes—Comanche braves—heap fight," was the reply.

The keen-eyed red-man had detected the war paint. It was a war party—over two hundred.

"Get your rifles, boys," said Frank.

"Ugh!" grunted Santanda. "No fight Comanche, no take scalps. If white man fight Comanche take all scalps."

"Not much they won't," said Charley. "We can whip your whole tribe, Santanda."

"Young man talk like fool," said the chief, contemptuously.

"Well, we'll see about it."

The Indians came forward with wild yells. Frank turned aside as if to avoid meeting them.

They yelled the louder and fired a volley at the Tally-Ho, thinking it was a mail stage.

"Do you see that, chief?" cried Frank; "your people fired first. Now let 'em have it, Charley, all of you."

Charley, Pomp and Barney now opened on them with their deadly Winchesters. All three were splendid shots. The man from Devil's Hole remained as guard over the prisoner.

Crack—crack—crack! went the Winchesters, each having a charge of sixteen loads. Saddle after saddle were emptied, and in less than three minutes nearly thirty Comanche ponies were flying riderless over the plains, fully two-thirds of the forty-eight shots fired having taken effect.

Santanda was appalled at the terrible execution of the Winchesters. He had never seen rifles that fired sixteen times without being loaded.

"Load up again, boys," said Frank. "I'll keep her out of range for you."

The Comanches yelled like so many demons and made desperate efforts to overtake the Tally-Ho. But the iron team kept just beyond the range of their rifles.

When the Winchesters were reloaded, Pomp cried out:

"Looh heah—see dat big Injun on dat pony ober dar? Jes' watch me fetch 'im!"

Santanda glared, and Pomp aimed and fired. The chief knew it was too far for any rifle among his people to reach. To his surprise the big Indian tumbled to the ground and his pony went careering over the plains in another direction.

The host came on, though, yelling for vengeance, and the firing commenced again. The execution was so great that they suddenly halted and looked around at the number of riderless ponies about the plains.

It was more than they could understand. Nearly fifty Indians down and that stage still unhurt!

The Tally-Ho stopped.

"Let 'em have it, boys," said Frank. "They commenced it."

The fire started them on the retreat.

The Tally-Ho turned and pursued them. That created a panic, and they scattered, every man for himself.

CHAPTER XV.

SPOILING A RUCTION.

"DID I talk like a fool, chief?" Charley asked, pointing to the panic-stricken Comanches flying in every direction over the plains.

"Comanche heap big fool," said the chief.

"True, every word of it. If the Comanches come up to Devil's Hole they will all be killed," said the man from Devil's Hole. "Let them stay away from there. The whites don't want Comanches there."

"Comanches not go there," said the chief, shaking his head.

"Now tell me where you live," added Frank, "and we'll take you there."

The prisoner pointed still further southward, and away went the Tally-Ho like the rush of a mighty wind.

Just as the stars were beginning to peep out, they came in sight of the village of the Comanches.

Several hundred wigwams were grouped together without much regard to order or regularity.

The Tally-Ho drove up into their very midst ere the women and children suspected its presence. A series of wild shrieks from the steam whistles brought every living soul tumbling heels over head out into the clearing, to see what in creation had broken loose.

Such a motely collection of frightened women, children and old men, Frank and his comrades had never seen before. Shrieks and screams rent the air, and they would all have taken to their heels, had not Santanda given a whoop that they both recognized and understood.

But they understood more than he intended. They thought the Tally-Ho was a wonderful stage the great chief had captured and brought into the village, and accordingly they began to make merry, singing and dancing in great glee.

"Och, be the powers!" exclaimed Barney O'Shea. "It's me own fut as is aching for a dance with them red lasses."

Jump down and dance wid 'em," said Pomp, reaching down under a box for his banjo, which he had not had a chance to use since he had started out with the Tally-Ho, "an' I'll make dere heads swim with music."

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, leaping to the ground, just as Santanda got down from his high seat. "Come up, ye red-faced lasses an' dance wid a dacint Christian."

The Indian women didn't understand a word he said, though they kept up their singing and dancing with an energy and enthusiasm peculiarly their own. They pressed forward around Santanda in a sort of feminine mob.

Pomp struck up an old Virginia reel, and Barney seized a young woman who seemed to take no interest in the proceedings at all. He had not seen her face, and as he flew around with her in the dance she said:

"Why in the world did you let them take you? They will kill you!"

Barney knew it was no Indian who was talking to him. He stopped, turned her face up to him, and gazed down at it.

It was the face of a young white woman.

"Bedad, but ye are not a haythin!"

"No—I am a captive," she replied, in a sad tone of voice.

"Show me the bloody haythin as captured ye, an' I'll bate the head av him!"

"Hush-sh!" she whispered; "they'll hear you!"

"Phat if they do?" he cried. "Begorra, an' didn't we lick the whole gang av red naygurs?"

"Did your people beat them?"

"Yes, every mither's son av thim;" and then Barney snatched her up in his brawny arms, and started toward the Tally-Ho with her.

Two old crones who had been appointed to watch the fair captive now sprang forward with wild screeches, and undertook to drag her away from him.

"Take the ould hags off av me, Pomp!" cried Barney, struggling to get up on the Tally-Ho with his burden.

"Go 'way dar, I tole yer!" cried Pomp, pushing the old hags back. One of them sprang at him and gave him a raking with her nails, that made him think a whole stack of wildcats had tackled him.

"Hi, dar!" he yelled; "take dat an' see how youse like it!" and with that he gave her a whack on the head with the banjo, which sent her rolling over on the ground as though a mule had kicked her.

Then the whole bunch of squaws attacked him. They piled on him like bees around a sugar barrel, screeching and yelling like so many maniacs.

"Whoop!" yelled Pomp, now swinging his banjo till nothing but the handle, which was a pretty solid piece of timber, was left in his hands. "Look out dar, yer yaller gals! I's a-thumpin' yer!"

The way he laid about him with the remnant of his banjo was a caution to Indian women. He literally strewed the ground with them.

Santanda yelled, and went in to protect his women, as did a few old men. But Pomp's blood was now up. He laid out Santanda with a single blow of the banjo-handle.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, who had stowed the young captive away in the Tally-Ho, leaping to the ground; "make a rale loive ruction av it, me darlints! Ould Ireland foriver! Whoop—down wid yez, ye ould spalpeen!" and down went an old Indian who had got in his way.

The whole village was now up in arms.

"Charley," said Frank, "make Pomp and Barney get into the Tally-Ho, or we'll have to kill a lot of women and children. We must get away from here, and that right away."

Charley leaped to the ground and caught Pomp by the arm.

"Mount at once, Pomp; we are going to leave."

Pomp knew how to obey, and in another moment he was up on his seat ruefully contemplating the ruins of his banjo.

But Barney was not so easily controlled. He gloried in a free fight, and this was one that challenged his best love. He went for Santanda, who had risen to his feet again, and knocked him out of time.

"Whoop!" he yelled, toppling over an old man, "stand up to it, ye baythins! Come up an' take yer dose loike dacint divils!"

"All aboard!" cried Frank.

"Whoop! Erin go braghi!" and down went another red-skin.

The man from Devil's Hole leaped down and went to Charley's assistance. He seized the wild Irishman around the waist, and lifting him up, literally walked off with him.

"Lave me alone, ye Divil Holer!" yelled Barney, as they pulled him up to his seat.

"Keep quiet, Barney, or I'll pitch you down among them again," said Frank, preparing to move off.

"Faith, an' ye've shpoiled the finest ruction as iver I saw in me loife!"

The steam whistles blew again, and the howling women and children scattered like so many frightened sheep, tumbling over each other in their terror and eagerness to get out of the way.

"G'lang there!" cried Frank, and the gallant steam horses, their eyes suddenly blazing with electric lights, plunged forward and turned around through the village so as to avoid a hill on the other side.

"Good-bye, Santanda!" yelled the man from Devil's Hole. "Stay at home and be a good boy in future."

Once outside the village again, they turned northward, and went flying over the plains, keeping several miles to the right to avoid the trail made on their way down.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RESCUED MAIDEN'S STORY.

THE Tally-Ho bounded along over the smooth prairie at railroad speed. The stars were shining brightly, but the electric light from the horses' eyes piloted the way much better.

Neither Charley, Frank, nor the man from Devil's Hole knew that it was a white girl whom Barney O'Shea had thrown into the Tally-Ho until they had gone at least fifty miles from the Indian village.

"What are you going to do with that Indian girl in there, Barney?" Charley suddenly asked the Irishman as they were bowling along.

"Indian be blowed!" exclaimed the indignant Irishman. "She's as dacent a Christian as iver was born."

"What's that, Barney O'Shea?" cried Frank, suddenly looking back at Barney. "Do you mean to say that she is a white girl?"

"Sure an' I'd d," replied Barney, "and bad luck to the man as says she isn't. It's Barney O'Shea as 'll bate his head off av him an' he says it."

"Great Jehosaphat!" cried Frank. "The Irishman is the real hero, after all. Get away there—open the thing, and let her out. I want to talk to her. Here, Charley, drive this team awhile. Look straight ahead for dangers."

Charley took Frank's place at the reins, and the young inventor turned his attention to letting the young woman out of the body of the Tally-Ho. He made the others get back on the back seat, and then opened the top of the vehicle.

She was reclining against the roll of canvas, which served as a tent during camping hours.

"Miss, you are safe," he said; "at least fifty miles from the Indian village. You may—"

"Fifty miles!" she cried, interrupting him, as she arose to her feet and glanced around at the open prairie. "Why, you haven't been away more than two hours!"

"That's true, but we travel about twenty-five miles an hour. Our horses are made of iron and run by steam."

"Are we really safe, then?"

"Yes—perfectly safe."

"And they can't catch us again?"

"No; all the Indians in the world can't catch us," was the reply.

"Thank God—thank God!" she cried, burying her face in her hands and bursting into tears of joy. Her tears were so real and her expressions so pathetic, that every man of the party hastily brushed tears from his own eyes.

"Have you been long a prisoner among the Indians, miss?" Frank asked, as he gently forced her into a seat by his side.

"Yes—nearly two years," she said, looking up. "Oh, it has been a horrible nightmare to me. It can't be real. It must be a dream."

"I assure you, miss, that this is not a dream, but a real fact. You are now safe from the Indians. We are Americans, and therefore your friends—brothers to any lady in distress."

This brought tears to the eyes of the poor girl, and she wept only as a soul overwhelmed by sudden joy could weep.

"My name is Emma Thorpe," she said, after drying up her tears. "My parents were murdered by the Indians, and myself and a younger sister carried away to their villages. Tongue cannot tell what we have suffered. My sister was taken away from me nearly a year ago and carried to another chief's village. She was to be his wife. I have not heard from her since, and her tears came afresh again."

"Don't cry any more," said Frank, tenderly. "You may rest assured that if your sister is alive, you shall have her with you again. I pledge you my word of honor to bring her to you if she is alive, and can be found—eh, pards?"

"Yes, sure as fate!" exclaimed the other four.

"Ah! if I dared indulge the hope!" she cried. "But you don't know what a powerful tribe the Comanches are. They can muster two or three thousand warriors on very short notice, and they all have fire-arms."

"We can whip three thousand as easily as three dozen," said Frank.

She looked at him as though she doubted his sanity.

Frank smiled.

"You don't understand our means of defense," he said. "Our horses are iron and this Tally-Ho also. Bullets can have no effect on them. We can inclose ourselves in here where we can fire all day through small holes without being hurt ourselves. Then we have rifles that shoot sixteen times without loading, and which kill at the distant of one mile. Then again, if they try to escape from us we can run them down in a few minutes. They can't catch us, you see, so we have the decided advantage, and would not hesitate to fight ten thousand of the fiends as long as they have no artillery."

The young lady was astounded.

"It sounds like a dream," she said. "I don't know how to thank you. Words fail me, and again tears came into her eyes."

"Don't try to thank us. Keep a cheerful heart and that will make us all happy. You shall see your sister again if she is still alive."

She then related the particulars of her capture by the Comanches. Her parents were

with a small emigrant train going across the plains, when they were overpowered by the villains, the entire train captured, and men and old women killed, and the young women carried off captives. It was a pitiful story, that brought tears to the eyes of all.

"Where are you going now?" she finally asked.

"To Devil's Hole, a town of white settlers some two hundred miles from the place where we found you. We left there this morning, captured Santanda in the midst of his warriors, and ran off with him. His braves are on the trail, but it will take them at least four or five days to get back home where they will find him. He has learned enough to make him keep away from about Devil's Hole, I think."

"Oh, sir, you have made a great mistake," said Miss Thorpe. "He is the worst fiend that ever lived. You should have killed him, for it was he made the Comanches do such terrible things."

"Sure, an' didn't I want ter bate the loife out av the ould hatbin!" exclaimed Barney O'Shea.

"An' didn't I bust dis hyer ole banjo ober his head?" cried Pomp, displaying the wreck of his once musical treasure.

"Well, may be we may have to deal with him yet, and if we do, we won't forget what you have just told us," said Frank. "We are going to Devil's Hole, where you will be taken care of. We will be ready then to go in search of your sister in a few days."

"Oh, I don't deserve so much kindness," she sobbed.

"Yes, you do. You deserve all we can do for you. We will pledge our lives to return your sister if she is still alive."

"Halloo—Frank!" cried Charley. "Here's timber ahead of us?"

"Go slow, then. It's time we took in more water, anyhow."

The speed of the horses was reduced to a brisk trot, and in a few minutes they halted in the edge of a belt of timber which, in that section, was a sure sign of a stream of water.

The man from Devil's Hole leaped to the ground, followed by Barney O'Shea, and went forward, revolver in hand, to find the water. They soon reached the banks of a small river or large creek, which was only a few rods from where the Tally-Ho had stopped.

They drank some of the water, and then went back after pails to get some for the boilers. Pomp now joined them, and they soon had a barrel of water in the boiler and tanks together. Frank looked after the fires, while Charley kept the driver's seat and chatted with Miss Thorpe, whom he found to be a very intelligent young woman of some five-and-twenty years of age.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RETURN TO DEVIL'S HOLE.

HAVING taken in plenty of water, they got ready to resume the journey. Of course they could not cross the stream nor go through the woods, so they had to turn to the left, as they knew Devil's Hole lay in that direction.

Charley still held the reins and held them well. He was as good a driver as Frank himself. Frank now turned his attention to the comfort of the fair passenger they had on board.

"Inside are blankets on which you can lie and sleep very comfortably, Miss Thorpe," he said to her, "and as we are going to travel all night, you would do a wise thing to turn in and get all the sleep you can."

"But that would be depriving you gentlemen of your—"

"By no means," interrupted Frank, very frankly. "We prefer to remain in our seats and sleep, which we can do with both comfort and safety, as you can see from their construction."

"But you will all take cold in this night air, going at such speed as this," she protested.

"No danger. We have heavy overcoats which amply protect us."

"Oh, you are so kind to me, a perfect stranger!"

"You are no stranger to me, Miss Thorpe," said Frank, gallantly. "I am a brother—remember that."

"Thanks," she murmured, and then was quietly stowed away in the Tally-Ho, where she arranged the blankets and the tent-cloth into a comfortable bed.

Being dressed as an Indian girl, she had but little in the way of clothes, hence she threw herself down on the blankets just as she was, and was soon in the land of dreams.

The Tally-Ho soon passed the band of Comanches, who were on the southward bound trail. Of course they did not see it, for it was several miles out of the way.

Just before daylight, the Tally-Ho turned squarely off to the left and pushed forward till it struck the trail made the day before.

"Now we can push on in perfect confidence," said Frank, who had now taken the reins; "we know the road and need not watch except to keep the trail."

"Yes—let 'em out now," said Charley, "while I take a nap."

Frank did "let 'em out," and the gallant Tally-Ho fairly flew along the smooth level. The hills began to loom up, and soon they entered the little valley that led up to the town of Devil's Hole.

Some time after sunrise, they came in sight of the town. Frank signaled to the anxious people by awakening all the echoes with the steam whistles.

The whole population came out to greet them. The men, knowing nothing of the long trip they had made, had guarded the town all night.

Cheer after cheer rent the air as they halted in front of the stage office. Men, women and children crowded around, eager to hear the news.

"Where's them Injuns?" cried an excited man in the crowd.

"On their way south as fast as their ponies can carry them," replied Frank, from the driver's seat. "We've been down to Santanda's home, and let him there, after giving him a lesson he will not soon forget. We also rescued a young lady there who had been a captive among them nearly two years. Here she is," and opening the Tally-Ho, he took the fair maiden by the hand, and made her stand by his side.

Those rough, but kind-hearted citizens of Devil's Hole made the welkin ring with their shouts of welcome. Tears came into her eyes at such manifestations of kindness. She was assisted to the ground, where the postmaster's wife took her in her arms and kissed her.

Charley Gorse gave it away that Barney O'Shea was really the rescuer of Miss Thorpe, and everybody took him by the hand and invited him to drink with them. Barney was a true son of Erin. He could not say no to an invitation to drink, and the result was he was soon blind drunk. Pomp had to take him on his shoulder and carry him out to the Tally-Ho, where he was locked up inside to sober up at leisure.

"The mails will be ready for you at sunrise to-morrow, Mr. Reade," said the postmaster to Frank, after Miss Thorpe had been carried into the house by the good wife of the federal official.

"We will be ready for the mails before sunrise," replied Frank.

The balance of the day was devoted to looking over the machinery of the Tally-Ho. Everything was duly examined, and accidents provided against. Provisions were cooked and tendered by the kind-hearted woman, who felt that they owed a debt of gratitude to the bold young men and the Tally-Ho.

During the afternoon Frank and Charley sought an interview with Miss Thorpe. They did not at first recognize her, for she was dressed in proper clothing, furnished by the kind mothers and daughters of Devil's Hole. She was a really handsome young lady, with sun-browned complexion and clear blue eyes.

She received them with a glad smile of welcome.

"Miss Thorpe," said Frank, "we have come to say to you that we are going to carry the

mails through, and then give a week to hunting for your sister. You can remain here, of course, till we return. In fact, as your parents are dead, and you know not where your other relatives are, you have been adopted by the Tally-Ho as its daughter."

"You are too kind—how can I ever thank you!" she sobbed.

"You can repay us tenfold by allowing us to contribute to your happiness and comfort. It gives us more pleasure than words can express to do so."

"You will have my heartfelt gratitude during life," she said, "which is all I have to give."

"Well, look upon us as your two brothers," added Charley, "and we shall regard you as our sister. Here are one hundred dollars. You will need clothes. There are two stores here where you can purchase—"

At such generosity the young lady burst into tears, burying her face in her hands and sobbing convulsively.

Charley and Frank looked at each other a moment and then suddenly retreated from the room. Their modesty equaled their courage. They could not stand a woman's tears under such circumstances, and so beat a hasty retreat.

When Miss Thorpe looked up again she found herself alone. But the roll of money was on the little table at her side. She took it up and kissed it. The act had shown a side of human sympathy she had never seen before.

An hour later Barney O'Shea woke up and wanted to get out of the Tally-Ho.

"No," said Charley. "You got blind drunk this morning. That's against the Tally-Ho rules. You must remain where you are, as there is no jail in this town."

Barney scratched his head in dumfounded amazement.

"Faith!" he exclaimed, "whin did yez make a jail av the Tally-Ho?"

"When you got drunk," was the reply.

"Then be the powers, I'll niver get dhrunk any more," said he, seeing they had the better of him.

"Sign the pledge?"

"Yis—niver to git dhrunk."

"All right. I'll take your word for it," and Charley led him out.

He washed up, and paid a visit to the young lady he rescued from the Comanches. She received him as she had Charley and Frank.

"Bedad, but we niver had the dance out," he said, as he clasped her hand in his. "The ould wimin shpoiled it an' gave us a noice ruction in-stid."

"Yes; you seemed to enjoy it very much, though, Mister O'Shea."

"Och, an' wasn't it for your sake, acushla! Divil a wan av me name would hesitate to foight the whole tribe for yez."

"You are kind and brave. I will never forget you, Mr. O'Shea."

"Thin we'll have the dance to-night, begorra!"

"Yes, I will gladly dance with you at any time, for I used to be very fond of dancing."

"Whoop!" yelled the enthusiastic Irishman, snatching her around the waist and spinning around the room with her. "We'll shake a fut for ould Ireland to-night!" and then he rushed out to agitate the prospective dance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAPTURED BY OUTLAWS.

BARNEY carried the day for once in his life and was happy. Everybody seconded his proposition for a dance, and preparations were accordingly made for the grand event.

Three fiddlers were employed, and all the women in the village made desperate efforts to outshine the others. Pomp was to do the calling, as there was not a woman of his color within five hundred miles of Devil's Hole.

The dance took place, and Barney and Miss Thorpe opened the ball. They danced well, and then general hilarity reigned. Everybody seemed determined on enjoying himself, and the revelry went on till a late hour.

The next morning the Tally-Ho took the

mails and started on its long trip, now east, a thousand miles to the railroad. They expected to make the round trip in a week, or eight days at furthest.

"Now, boys," said Frank, "we must divide time so as to give each a fair amount of sleep. We can then push through with but little inconvenience."

"Bedad, I can shlope all the time an' niver git toired," remarked Barney, settling down into his seat for a nap.

"Of course you can," laughed Charley, "for you never closed an eye last night for watching and thinking of Emma Thorpe."

"Wud ye have me dance wid me eyes shut?"

"Ob course," said Pomp, "an' sleep wid 'em open."

"Bedad, av yez would only open yer mouth when aslape yer would astonish the wurrold wid yer wisdom," retorted Barney.

"Well, go to sleep and stop your noise," said Frank; "I'll wake you all up when the time comes."

The three then settled down for a quiet nap, and Frank held the reins for a swift run of fifty miles or more.

An hour carried them to the plains beyond the hills that surrounded the town of Devil's Hole. Then he let them out at their best, over the smooth prairie. As far as the eye could reach the dead level extended north, east and south. No fear of accidents or unexpected obstacles disturbed the young inventor's mind. The horses made the best time ever yet made on the plains.

In the afternoon Charley took the reins, and Frank went inside to lie down for a good nap. The others were wide awake and ready for any adventure that might turn up. They saw a few buffaloes and deer, with any number of smaller game.

But they did not take any time to hunt. They wanted to get through as quickly as possible, and get back to Devil's Hole to go on the hunt for Emma Thorpe's captive sister.

Night came on, and still the young inventor of the Tally-Ho slept. They came to the river which they had crossed on their way out, keeping in the old track of the former stages.

Midnight came and the moon arose out of the bosom of the prairie, as it is said to rise out of the depths of the sea by ocean travelers. Still the tireless steam horses pushed on, never perspiring, never showing signs of fatigue, and answering the slightest touch of the reins.

Just at daylight they entered the hilly country again. Frank had finished his nap and had relieved Charley.

Such was the nature of the road among the hills that they were compelled to reduce the speed to something like six or seven miles an hour. The route wound around the base of abrupt hills in places so narrow that a deviation of three feet would precipitate them a hundred feet below.

It was in such a place as this that Frank, on turning sharply around a hill, came suddenly upon a formidable obstruction in the shape of several huge boulders that had been loosened above and sent rolling down into the middle of the road.

"Inside, quick!" said Frank, touching the spring that opened the Tally-Ho. They tumbled in just as a volley of rifle shots startled them.

No one had seen an enemy. But Frank, the moment he saw the obstructions, suspected an ambush, and, as it proved, was just in time to escape death by the bullets.

"We are in a bad fix," he said, after listening a moment to the yells of both Indian and white outlaws.

"How so?" Charley asked.

"We can't pass those boulders out there, nor go back. The road is too narrow to allow us to turn around."

"That's true," muttered Charley. "We've got to fight it out with them. I see one of the rascals now!" and taking a Winchester, he sent a ball through the rascal's head.

"Yes, we must stand a siege, and fight it out," said Frank. "We've got one advantage—they can't hit us, while we can hit them when—"

ever they show up. We've got provisions enough to last a week. We can make them tired of this game before the day is over."

"Be the powers!" exclaimed Barney O'Shea, "there's one haythin as is toired now!" and he sent a bullet through one who had exposed himself to the Irishman's deadly aim.

"Keep a sharp lookout," said Frank; "they can't shoot at us without exposing themselves more or less. Whenever you think you can make a shot tell, let 'em have it."

"Begorra, I'll give 'em all I've got, the dirthy spalpeens!"

"Heah goes for anoder!" and the crack of Pomp's rifle jerked a death-scream from a red-skin.

Thus several hours passed, and still the siege went on.

"Let's wait now," suggested Frank, "and see what they will do. Stop firing."

They remained quiet for nearly two hours, during which time the outlaws and their Indian allies thought they were either killed or else were out of ammunition.

They gradually became bolder, and began to show themselves with impunity. One, two, three, five, ten, twenty whites and red-skins soon showed themselves, and gradually approached nearer and nearer to the prize they now almost deemed their own. Dozens more came out from behind every place that could afford shelter, and came down into the road.

White men's voices were plainly heard among them.

"Wait, don't fire!" whispered Frank. "Close the ports, so they can't peep inside at us."

This was done, and then those inside kept the most profound silence.

The outlaws came swarming around, and climbed upon the Tally-Ho.

"Say, in there!" cried a voice, "are you all dead?"

Charley gave a dismal groan, like a man in the agonies of death.

"Whoop, boys!" cried the voice, "the prize is ours! I hear 'em groaning inside!" and he tried to open the Tally-Ho, but could not. In pulling back a crank he started the horses forward.

"That's it!" he exclaimed, suddenly pushing back the crank. "I can run this thing. Move those bowlders out of the way and we'll soon get her out on the level."

CHAPTER XIX.

TURNING THE TABLES—A TERRIBLE FIGHT—A BAND WIPED OUT.

THE four young men inside the Tally-Ho could hear every word uttered by the outlaws. They kept profound silence, and let them believe that they had been killed by chance bullets penetrating the port-holes of the Tally-Ho.

But when Barney O'Shea heard the leader of the outlaws order his men to clear away the obstructions for him to drive by with the captured prize, he looked very uneasily at both Charley and Frank.

"Bedad!" he whispered, "the spalpeen will dhrove over the precipice an' kill us dead intirely."

"Keep quiet," said Frank. "I can manage it. I only want them to remove those bowlders."

The outlaws went to work with a will—twenty or thirty of them—and soon sent the bowlders crashing down the precipice to the bottom of the ravine.

"That'll do—clear the track!" cried the leader of the outlaws, as he started to pull the crank that would start the team.

Frank was controlling the machinery inside, and guided the team carefully as it struck up a moderate pace around the hill.

The outlaws cheered, mounted their horses, and followed on behind the Tally-Ho, thinking they had captured the greatest prize that had ever showed up in the West.

"Let them go out into the plains," said Frank, "and then we'll have some fun with them."

They remained quite still during the hour that was consumed in reaching the plains. They

listened to the enthusiasm of the outlaws, who talked loudly about what they would now do.

"Why, this will make us masters of the plains," said the leader. "We can dictate to the red-skins, and levy contributions on every wagon train that shows up. Nothing can catch us."

"Yes," said another, "we've got the biggest thing on wheels."

"You can bet your pile on that, pard," responded the leader. "Take it all in all, our fortune is made."

Frank gradually increased the speed until the horses of the hundred and more behind had to put in good work to keep up with them. They pushed out at least twenty miles into the dead level of the plains, when the others clamored for a rest.

There were three outlaws on the top, and Frank prepared to give them a surprise.

Charley, Barney and Pomp got ready with their bowies, and Frank prepared to touch the spring that would open the top and drop them in their midst.

"Ready?" Frank asked.

"Yes, ready," was the reply.

"Take them prisoners if you can," said Frank; and the next moment the three outlaws were down in a heap in the bottom of the Tally-Ho.

"Surrender, or die!" cried Charley, holding his bowie at the throat of the dumfounded leader.

Barney and Pomp each had their man in the same tight place. The surprised villains saw death staring them in the face.

"I surrender," said the leader, hoping to catch Charley off his guard, and thus make a bold strike for liberty.

"Hold up your hands!"

Up went the hands of all three.

"Go through them, Frank," said Charley.

Frank increased the speed of the team, and then disarmed the three ruffians. Then he produced cords, and securely tied their hands behind them.

"Say, now," said Charley to the leader, "tell the truth, didn't we play that game nicely?"

The outlaw fairly foamed at the mouth. He had been duped and captured as easily as though he had been nothing but a mere child.

"Out on top, men," cried Frank, suddenly leaping to the driver's seat, "with your rifles! Not a rascal must escape alive!"

The band of outlaws and Indians were about a half mile behind, their ponies nearly exhausted in their efforts to keep up with the magnificent prize they had captured.

"Let 'em have it, boys!"

Charley, Pomp, and Barney stood up with their Winchesters, and took deliberate aim and fired. Three saddles were emptied. Without taking the rifles from their shoulders they fired the second time, and three more saddles were emptied, the riderless ponies running helter-skelter over the prairie.

The outlaws halted, wondering why their leader had allowed them to be fired on. The Tally-Ho also halted, and then the three death-dealing Winchesters commenced a horrible destruction. Men dropped out of saddles almost as fast as one could count.

Suddenly the outlaws turned and fled back in the direction they had come.

The Tally-Ho turned and pursued them, keeping them within range of those terrible marksmen.

The outlaw chief saw his devoted band melting away like mist before the sun.

"Mercy!" he gasped. "Don't kill them all!"

"Did one of your men ever show mercy to a human being?" Frank asked, turning suddenly upon him. "Kill every man in range, boys."

Crack—crack—crack! went the rifles, and the terror-stricken wretches urged their already jaded horses to the top of their speed.

At last they scattered, as the only hope of escaping the doom that threatened. But Charley and Frank pushed on, making a sort of half circle, and bringing them in reach. The terrible work went on. The rifles were reloaded,

sixteen charges each, and again turned on them.

As the last hope to save their miserable lives, five of them dismounted, fell on their knees, and begged for quarter.

"Stay where you are till we pick you up!" cried Frank, as the Tally-Ho dashed past them. "Don't let a man escape, boys! We'll break up this business, or make somebody very sick of it."

The work went on until every man but the five who had surrendered had gone down, and nothing but riderless ponies were to be seen.

"That's well done—well done, boys!" cried Frank. "Now let's go back for our prisoners."

The Tally-Ho turned back, and was soon alongside the five trembling wretches, who begged piteously for their lives.

"Is this all of your band?" Frank asked of the captive leader.

"Yes."

"How many did you have?"

"About a hundred in all."

"This was a big mistake on your part, wasn't it?"

"Yes—awful mistake."

"Did your crowd capture Joe Bledsoe's stage?"

"Yes."

"And killed Joe and the passengers?"

The leader was silent. He was afraid to say more, for he suspected the object of the questions.

"We found the bones of the murdered men near where the stage was burned," continued Frank, as Barney, Pomp and Charley got down to secure the five prisoners who had surrendered.

"All of you get down," said Frank to the three men, and, though their hands were tied behind them, they managed to leap to the ground as ordered.

"Tie them all together, Charley," ordered Frank, "and let them remain there until we gather up all the rifles that are scattered about where they fell."

They were accordingly tied up hard and fast, so that they could not possibly get away, being so disarmed as not to have even a penknife with them.

"Now come up with those five rifles!"

The five rifles were tossed into the Tally-Ho, and the three daring companions of Frank mounted to the top to look out for rifles as the Tally-Ho drove slowly over the field of battle in search of them.

CHAPTER XX.

A QUEER HANGING.

THE Tally-Ho spent an hour running about after the guns of the dead outlaws. Wherever the body of one of the villains was seen they were sure to find a rifle lying close by. Over seventy-five were picked up, though there were nearly a score more lost in the grass.

"These will give poor Bledsoe's widow a handsome sum," said Frank, as he looked at the pile of rifles in the Tally-Ho.

"By George, that's so!" exclaimed Charley, grasping Frank's hand. "I'm glad you thought of that."

"The thought occurred to me as I drove past those five men who surrendered. They had good rifles, worth at least fifty dollars each."

"Yes, some of them even double that, some less."

"Well, we'll go back and attend to the prisoners now."

"What are you going to do with them, Frank? There are eight of them, worthless, desperate, and as blood-thirsty as any Indian in all the West."

"What shall we do with them?" Frank asked.

"Bedad!" exclaimed Barney O'Shea, "let's have an illegant ruction wid 'em, an' bate their heads off av 'em! Begorra, but it's an illegant toime we'd have."

"We must dispose of them some way," remarked Frank, "as carry them through we cannot."

"No, and it isn't a pleasant thing to shoot

them in cold blood. I am satisfied they deserve hanging—that they are red-handed murderers and robbers."

"Ah, I have it!" exclaimed Frank, with sudden energy.

"What is it?"

"Tie 'em behind the Tally-Ho, and run 'em to death, and then cut 'em loose."

"Just the thing! Turn 'em loose alive, and they'd join the Indians again, and try the same old game."

"Of course they would. I've no notion of letting them get away. Get the lariats off of some of those ponies out there, and tie them all in a row, four or five feet apart, and then make 'em fast to the Tally-Ho. Maybe they'd be glad to go with us that way."

"Begorra, but they'll run like the devil!"

"And run to the devil, too, in double-quick time," added Charley, as he got down to go to the half dozen nearest ponies, which were feeding close by.

The lariats were obtained, and then they went to the prisoners.

The leader was the first one to be tied.

"What are you going to do with us?" he asked, tremulously.

"Oh, we're going to tie you so you won't give us any trouble," replied Charley.

"Ain't you going to take us through to—"

"Oh, yes, of course, but you don't suppose we're going to take eight big fellows like you along untied for you to jump on us when we are not thinking about it, do you? Not much. We are not fools, you know."

The leader thought he was the fool, and remained very quiet till all the others were tied in a row behind him.

Then, when Pomp began tying the end of the lariat to the heavy axle of the Tally-Ho, he turned deathly pale, and cried out:

"For God's sake don't do that! Shoot us at once and be done with it!"

"Oh, get out! We're not villains like yourself!" cried Charley. "We never shoot prisoners. I guess you can keep up if this lariat doesn't break?"

The prisoners groaned and begged piteously.

"I'll tell everything!" cried one. "Spare me and I'll tell all I know."

"So will I!"

"I'll tell where the other band can be found!" cried a third.

"Why, what's all the fuss about?" exclaimed Charley, pretending great surprise at their uneasiness. "We'll pull you through all right."

This re-assured them that they were not to be dragged to death, and they ceased their pleadings.

"All ready?" Frank asked.

"Yes—all ready," replied Charley, as he and the other two climbed to their seats again.

"Now youse run like de debil!" cried Pomp, as the Tally-Ho started off at a brisk trot.

The prisoners trotted along for a mile or two, and then began to grow tired of that kind of traveling.

"Charley," said Frank, to his cousin, "those fellows are murderers."

"Yes, every man of them."

"And deserve to be hanged."

"Of course they do."

"Well, we may as well hang them as any sheriff."

Charley looked at his cousin as though he could not see what he was driving at.

"If we carry them through, and turn them over to the authorities, they'll make us stay there to the trial," continued Frank, "and then detain us several months. All we can swear against them is, that they attacked the Tally-Ho, and the chances are that they would get off with a light punishment."

"Yes, very likely."

"And they would then go to murdering and robbing again."

"No doubt of it."

"Well, I am going to run 'em to death!"

"What?"

"Run 'em to death—cut 'em loose, and let the coyotes bury them."

Charley looked away across the prairie as if

to catch a glimpse of something out there. He kept silent for several minutes, as did Frank.

"Well?" Frank finally spoke.

"You are right," said Charley. "They deserve a dog's death. Give it to them as speedily as possible."

Frank looked back at the eight prisoners. The perspiration was streaming down their faces, and their very clothing seemed saturated, so great was their exertion to keep up with the Tally-Ho.

"Stop—stop, for God's sake!" cried the outlaw leader. "We can't run any longer!"

"Mercy! Stop, for the love of Heaven!" cried another one of the party.

"Ugh—heap big run!" exclaimed the hindmost man, who was an Indian. "Injun no hoss—ugh!"

"Can't you hold out ten miles further?" Frank asked.

"Lord, no—not another mile!"

"Try it and see," and he put on an extra spurt.

A howl went up from all eight of the doomed men.

"Show yer speed, yer spalpeens!" cried Barney O'Shea.

"I'se a-bettin' on dat Injun!" whooped Pomp.

The Tally-Ho went faster and faster.

Down went the leader, who was first on the string.

Then the second followed, and the third and all the others, the Indian being the last to go down. He was a capital runner, making desperate efforts at every leap to gnaw the thong in two with his teeth.

"Bedad, but he's atin' the rope!" exclaimed Barney, who was watching the proceedings with breathless interest.

An extra spurt jerked the red-skin off his feet, and the whole string was down.

"Now for it," and the Tally-Ho shot forward at a terrible speed.

A wail of terrified agony came up from behind, but in another minute's time silence reigned. Life was extinct. They had made their last run.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MAD BUFFALO.

THE Tally-Ho suddenly stopped.

"Get down and cut 'em loose, Pomp," said Frank; and the daring black leaped to the ground, knife in hand, and cut the cord at the axle.

Then he speedily climbed back to his seat, and the Tally-Ho again started on its way northward.

"That is the end of that gang," remarked Charley, as he looked back at the eight shapeless human bodies on the plains.

"Yes," said Frank; "the completest wipe-out ever known on the plains, I think."

"Do you know, Frank," continued Charley, "that I think you can get a big thing out of the government by taking a contract to kill off all such parties in the West."

"Maybe I could, but I don't want any such contract. I don't want to contract to kill *anybody*. I will take a mail contract, and defend myself and the Tally-Ho when attacked."

"And clear out the assailants?"

"If I can, of course."

In a few minutes the dead outlaws were out of sight.

"That shpoiled an iligant ruction, bedad," said Barney, resuming his seat when they could no longer be seen.

"Plenty ob ructions ahead," said Pomp.

The Tally-Ho pushed on, and made up for much of the time it was detained by the outlaws. To gain every minute, they did not stop to prepare anything to eat. They ate the cold provisions the good women of Devil's Hole had cooked up for them.

Night came on again, and the watches for the run were arranged.

But about midnight a terrible storm came up. Dark, heavy clouds, full of electricity and thunder, seemed to reach almost to the very earth. Vivid flashes of lightning played all around

them, and the thunder rolled over the prairie as though the artillery of Heaven had belched forth its volleys.

"Charley," exclaimed Frank, "there's a good deal of steel about this thing. We may be wiped out in an instant by a lightning stroke."

"Then let's get inside and wait till the storm passes," replied Charley.

"Just what I was thinking of. There comes the rain now."

The rain, in huge drops, was pattering around them. They hastily stopped the Tally-Ho, and got inside. There they arranged the blankets and tent-cloth so as to make comfortable resting-places, and laid down to calmly wait for the fury of the storm to exhaust itself.

The storm howled and raged for two hours or more, the heavy peals of thunder making the earth tremble, and the big drops rattled like hail on the iron roof of the Tally-Ho.

When the fury of the storm had passed, and the rain ceased to fall, the young inventor emerged from his retreat, and examined the furnace. The fire was low. He renewed it, and then started again on the trip.

The rain had not quite obliterated the trail of former stages, as the ruts made by heavy wheels over level ground are not easily effaced. The brilliant electric lights from the eyes of the horses gleamed out through the darkness hundreds of yards in advance.

After mile after mile were passed, and the ride was becoming monotonous when Charley exclaimed:

"Good Heavens, look there!"

Coming down upon them like an avalanche, was an immense bull-buffalo. He was coming squarely to meet them.

Frank wheeled to the right and shot past him like an arrow.

"Lord! what a narrow escape!" he gasped. "If we had run into him, he would have upset the leader; the two wheel horses would have piled on top of him and we would have crowned the wreck with our broken bones."

"That shows we can't be too careful in our lookout ahead."

"Be the powers!" cried Barney O'Shea, springing to his feet and looking back into the darkness behind the Tally-Ho, "the black devil is following us, sure!"

"What?" cried Charley.

"Dere he comes—oh, Lord!" gasped Pomp.

Frank quickly turned one of the horse's heads so as to throw a ray of light behind the Tally-Ho, and was thunder-struck at what he saw.

Charging after the Tally-Ho at full speed came the bull buffalo they had just passed. The electric light was reflected in his bloodshot eyes, and a bellowing expressive of rage was plainly heard.

"By George!" exclaimed Frank, "he must be mad! He can't catch us, but we may meet more of them. Get a rifle—quick!"

Pomp made haste to get a rifle, while Frank slowed up to allow the mad bull to get nearer. The great beast rushed up with a bellowing roar, and butted the Tally-Ho with great force. They all felt the shock.

The Tally-Ho then shot ahead to give Pomp a chance to fire.

When the ugly beast presented a good front, Pomp gave him a bullet between the eyes. He uttered an angry roar and staggered forward to his knees, then, after an effort to rise, rolled over on his side.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney. "The ould beast is down wid a hidache!"

"Youse won't butt us no more," said Pomp, shaking his head as the dying bull faded away in the blackness of the night.

"That fellow must have been wounded, or gone mad from some other cause," said Charley. "I've heard of mad buffalo bulls but never saw one before."

"I certainly wouldn't like to meet one alone, out on the plains," answered Frank, "if that one back there was a specimen."

"Nor I, either. We will meet with more of them soon, as this is the time for them to come south in search of better grass."

"I hope we may meet them in the day-time, if we do."

"Yes; 'twould be safer."

Two laid down to sleep, and the other two continued the drive and watch till sunrise.

The day passed without anything worthy of note occurring, as did the following. A few small herds of bison were seen in the distance, moving southward, and that was all.

But on the following day Pomp called attention to a long black line on the prairie in front of them, miles and miles away.

Charley looked at the line curiously, and couldn't make it out.

"It can't be timber," he said.

"Get the spy-glass and see what it is, then," suggested Frank.

Barney got the glass and handed it to Charley, who drew it out, and applied it to his eye. In a moment he turned pale.

"Great Heaven!" he gasped; "it's buffaloes on the move! If they strike us it is certain death!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RUSHING HERD OF BUFFALOES.

At the mention of buffaloes, Frank glared at the long, low, rolling black line which was still miles away, and took in the threatened danger at once.

It was indeed a terrible danger.

No living thing could stand in the pathway of that moving mass of bellowing monsters.

He came to a full stop and gazed calmly at the coming danger, first at one end of the line and then at the other.

"Better be gettin' away from heah," said Pomp, as he stood up and gazed at the long, dark line now becoming more distinct every moment.

"So I think," said Charley. "It's a terrible danger, Frank."

"Yes—I know that. We'll turn to the right and pass their left," and with that he started the team again.

The Tally-Ho made good time, and still the left end of the line seemed a good way off.

"Better push up, Frank," urged Charley. "It's certain death to get caught. There's a million or more in that herd."

Frank put on more steam, but the Tally-Ho didn't increase in speed. On the contrary, it slowed up.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Frank, suddenly shutting off the steam and coming to a full stop, "the fire is nearly out!"

"Good Heavens!" cried Charley, swinging down to see about it.

"Quick, throw in more fuel, Charley!"

Charley hurried in the fuel as though life depended on his doing the job in just one minute. He literally filled the furnace, and then closed it, climbing quickly up to his seat again.

"Now be off for Heaven's sake!" he exclaimed.

Frank pulled the crank.

The Tally-Ho horses stood still as though they had taken root in the ground.

Charley groaned.

Frank turned pale.

The roar of the rushing, bellowing mass was distinctly heard. They did not seem to be a mile away.

"St. Patrick save us!" gasped Barney.

"I've gwine for ter run wid 'em!" said Pomp, proceeding to get down.

"Our safety is inside if we can't get away," said Frank, his face pale, and voice calm. "I hear the fire coming up, though. There's a can of oil inside, Charley. Get it and pour it on that wood."

Charley was just one minute in doing so.

An explosion followed, but nobody was heard to complain.

"Now come up," said Frank, coolly.

Charley climbed back to his seat alongside of Frank.

The herd were now within a half mile of the Tally-Ho, coming like a mighty avalanche.

The fire in the furnace blazed till the flames passed clear through the flues.

"For God's sake get away, Frank!" cried Charley, now thoroughly alarmed. "They'll be down on us in three minutes longer!"

Frank watched the steam, and the herd.

Both were coming up.

Suddenly, when the herd were within two hundred yards of them, he pulled the crank. The horses sprang forward with tremendous energy, urged by a full head of steam.

"Bless de Lord, we're safe!" ejaculated Pomp, relieved at the speed of the horses.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney. "Come on, ye murtherin' divils! Catch us av yer kin!"

The Tally-Ho now had to run almost directly away from the herd, edging toward the left wing of the buffalo army, though, as they went.

They had to run at least twenty miles in order to get out of the path of the rolling avalanche of shaggy monsters.

Just as soon as they had flanked the great army, they halted and stood up to gaze at the rushing mass.

"There must be millions of them," said Frank.

"They cannot be counted," yelled Charley.

The roar was like the roar of the ocean in a storm. The very earth trembled under the mighty rush.

Two hours the black mass of shaggy monsters rolled by. The distance across the herd was more than five miles.

"Thank de Lord, dey is gone," fervently ejaculated Pomp, as the main body passed, leaving only a few stragglers behind. Some could not keep up, of course.

"Look out, now; there come the Indians," said Charley. "Indians always follow a herd like that."

Sure enough, there were half a hundred Indian hunters making war on the stragglers from the great herd.

They were so intent on the chase that many of them did not see the Tally-Ho at all.

"Just keep still," said Frank, "but keep your rifles ready for use. We have as much right here as they have."

They got out their rifles, and remained seated, as though they were mere spectators of the chase.

Soon the Indian hunters saw them, and a dozen or so of them rode toward them.

"How do?" cried one of them, when within hailing distance.

"How!" responded Charley, who understood them better than any one else of the party.

The Indians drew near and gazed at the horses and Tally-Ho in the greatest surprise.

"Kill many buffaloes?" Charley asked.

"Kill heap buffalo—heap meat," was the reply.

"Good luck. Kill more."

They gathered around the iron horses, and seemed amazed at them.

The iron was a stunner to them. They touched it with their hands, and chattered in deep gutturals to each other.

"Blow the whistles and get off," whispered Charley to Frank, as he saw more Indians coming up.

Frank pulled the crank. The whistles shrieked, and the horses started off at a rapid trot.

The Indian ponies went off in a panic at the whistles. They had never heard such things before, neither had their riders.

Before either recovered from their panic, the Tally-Ho was a mile away, pushing northward at the rate of twenty-five miles an hour. The Indians gazed after them in a dazed sort of way, but did not attempt to pursue them.

"Bedad, but it lukes loike runnin' away from the bloody haythins," said Barney O'Shea, who had secretly wished for a fight with the aborigines.

"So it does," said Charley, "and so it is. We don't want to have a row with everybody we meet."

"Shure, an' didn't they want a shindy?" demanded Barney.

"Yes, perhaps they did; but——"

"Begorra, thin, yez ain't a thrue man, or yez would give 'em wan," interrupted Barney.

"You see we have no time to spare, Barney," said Charley, amused at the Irishman's philosophy. "We have lost too much time now."

"Yes, almost a whole day," added Frank. "We can't stop for a row now unless we are

forced to do so. Just wait till we get down among those Comanches in search of that other girl. Then you'll have all the ructions you can attend to."

"Hurry up, thin, an' lave 'em to me, faith, an' I'll bate the hide off the whole tribe!"

They did hurry up, and the fourth day from the time they left Devil's Hole they brought up at the railroad station, the end of the 1,000-mile stage route.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FATE OF AN UNBELIEVER.

THE postmaster and everybody else were astonished at seeing the Steam Tally-Ho dashing up in front of the stage office. They had not heard of it at that end of the line.

"Is the postmaster in?" Frank demanded, as he reined up in front of the post-office.

"Yes, I am the postmaster," said a man, pushing his way through the crowd to the side of the Tally-Ho.

"I've got the Santa Fe and Devil's Hole mail here for you," Frank remarked, rising and turning around, facing Pomp and Barney. "Toss 'em out, Pomp."

"Yes, sah," replied Pomp, who began tossing out some half dozen well-filled mail-bags.

"Why, how came you with this mail?" the astonished postmaster demanded.

"I brought it at the request of the postmaster at Devil's Hole," was Frank's reply. "Bled-soe was killed, and his stage burned by the Comanches and outlaws."

A murmur of horror was heard from the crowd.

"When did you leave Devil's Hole?" the postmaster asked.

"Four days ago."

"Four days ago!" gasped the postmaster; "a thousand miles in four days?"

"Yes; and we lost nearly a whole day fighting Indians, outlaws, and hunting buffaloes."

A look of incredulity came over the face of the postmaster.

"That's a long bow, stranger," remarked a weather-beaten miner in the group. "Yer don't run no sich yarns on this ere crowd."

Pomp was tossing out the mail-bags.

"I makes no difference to me whether you believe my yarn or not," replied Frank.

"It don't, eh? Waal, no galoot kin spin it hyar without a fight. Jes' git down an' take yer dose, stranger. I kin lick any liar in this 'ere town!" and the bully bared his arms as for a rough-and-tumble fight.

"For the love of Heaven let me get at the spalpeen!" cried Barney O'Shea, leaping to the ground and confronting the blustering bully. "Come on, ye dirty blaggard! I'll bate the head off av ye!" and with that he spat in his hands, and flourished his brawny fists in the miner's face.

The miner responded with a blow, which Barney deftly parried, and the next moment knocked him all in a heap among the crowd.

"Git up, ye lazy loon, an' show yer game! Whoop! I'm the b'y as kin bate the sass out av ye!"

The miner came up again, furious and wild. The knock-down and the taunt that followed had maddened him, and he rushed in to annihilate the belligerent Irishman.

But Barney O'Shea was not one to be annihilated. He loved the sport for its own sake, and was as much at home as any prize-fighter in the use of his natural weapons.

In just ten seconds the bully went down again, with an eye completely closed.

"Bedad, yer can't fight wid a gossoon!" exclaimed Barney, in disgust, as the miner arose slowly to his feet, and gazed around in a sort of befuddled way. "Thry it once more, ye daisy, an' better luck to ye!" and Barney waltzed around him in a way that made his head swim.

At last, beside himself with rage, the miner drew his revolver, and the crowd scattered.

Instantly Barney dashed in, knocked the weapon out of his hand, and gave him such

a drubbing that he cried out that he had enough.

"Faith, I belave ye," said Barney. "Do ye belave we made a thousand moiles in four days?"

"No," was the reply.

"Bedad, thin, I'll make yer belave ivery moile av it—that's wan moile," and a stunning blow sent him rolling in the dust again.

"Hold on thar, stranger," said the miner. "I believe yer made it in one day."

"Och, that's worse'n iver!" and Barney gave him another knock-down.

"Four days or none, ye blaggard!" yelled Barney.

"Yes, four days," replied the man.

"Git up and have a dhrink, bedad, for ye made it. Whoop! Show me the man as—"

"That'll do, Barney," interrupted Charley.

Frank blew the steam whistles, and Barney, thinking the Tally-Ho was about to be off, hastily scrambled up to his seat, and bowed to the crowd as they cheered him.

"Gentlemen," said the young inventor, "our horses go by steam. They never tire, make twenty-five miles an hour, and don't mind bullets any more than snow-flakes. Just look at the bullet-marks on both horses and stage. There are over a thousand of them, and still we survive. A change is coming. The Indians and outlaws are going away to the mountains, for we will sweep them from the plains. Science, skill, and courage will do the work. When we return we expect to reach Devil's Hole in three days."

The amazed crowd cheered him wildly, and then they crowded around the wonderful iron horses.

"Boys," said an old miner, as he gazed at the magnificent team, "this is gittin' clus ter the end. We old uns hez got to go under. We ain't no use no more," and the old red-shirt shook his head sadly as he turned away and re-filled his pipe.

All that day and evening our heroes remained in the town, answered a thousand questions an hour, and shaking hands with everybody. Barney told many wonderful tales of their adventures on the plains, and as he stood ready to whip unbelievers, he found nobody to dispute his extravagant statements.

Frank informed the postmaster that he would start at sunrise the next morning, and that official promised to have the mail ready for him. They laid in a supply of provisions, so as not to be detained on the way; also a lot of fuel and water.

That night the rough miners had a grand ball in honor of the Tally-Ho, which they kept up all night. They would not disperse till they had seen the Tally-Ho start on her long journey, which she did at sunrise.

Cheer after cheer followed them as they sped out of the little town, and reeled off mile after mile in quick succession.

In less than a half hour the town was out of sight behind them, and the illimitable prairie in front.

"Now we will see what is the best time we can make," said Frank, as they bowled along the dead-level country.

"Yes—for I am anxious to get after those Comanches again, and find that young lady captive," said Charley.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SEARCHING FOR THE LOST.

With a determination to reach Devil's Hole as quick as possible, the young men of the Tally-Ho bent every energy to make the trip a successful as well as a quick one. The level country afforded a fine run, as the first five hundred miles was almost without a break.

At the river they took in more water and pushed on, and on the third day, late in the evening, they reached Devil's Hole.

Many were in bed, but when they heard the steam whistles of the Tally-Ho, they sprang up, dressed and hurried to the stage office to get the news.

They were amazed at the quick time that had

been made. The whole thing seemed like a dream to them.

Emma Thorpe came running into the stage office, dressed like the neat and charming young woman that she was, and kissed Frank in the presence of half a hundred citizens.

"Welcome back, my dear—dear brother!" and then she broke down. Her overcharged emotions overcame her control.

"Thanks, dear sister!" said Frank, taking her hand in his and pressing it warmly. "We have come back to hunt for your sister Alice."

"Yes," said Charley, taking her other hand in his, "and we will find her, if alive, you may rest assured of that."

Charley then led her out of the crowded stage office into the sitting-room of the postmaster's family, with whom she was staying.

There was great rejoicing in Devil's Hole over the return of the Tally-Ho, and many citizens of that out-of-the-way place thought it ought to be made a permanent holiday.

On the next day, Frank announced that he was going down among the Comanches in search of Emma Thorpe's sister Alice.

"The Sante Fe mail will not be in for ten days," he said to the postmaster, "so we will have ample time for the search."

"There's lots of our boys who want to go with you," said a man near his side.

"Yes, I know, and I wish we could take 'em, but we can't, you see. Too many would be worse than not enough."

"So they would," assented the man. "How long before you start?"

"In two hours," he replied.

The man walked away, and Frank busied himself in arranging things about the Tally-Ho for the trip.

Precisely at noon he blew the whistles, and Barney and Pomp at once climbed up to their seats.

Emma Thorpe came running out of the house, dressed as if for a long journey, and said, in a very firm tone of voice:

"Give me a seat, brothers; I am going with you."

"Whoop—hooray!" yelled Barney O'Shea, swinging his cap above his head. "We're the b'yes as'll see yer through. Come up, me darlint!" and reaching down he caught her by the hand and drew her up to a seat alongside of him.

She blushed at the gallant speech of the Irishman, but kept a brave command of herself.

"Really, Miss Emma," protested Frank, amazed at this sudden determination on her part, "you know not the danger you are courting."

"Yes, I do," she replied; "I know all the danger. As an interpreter I can be of immense service to you, and probably be the means of doing more than you dream of."

"But you must not go. You must wait—"

"Oh, I cannot wait," she interrupted him. "I would die if you left me behind. Let me go, please."

He could not resist such an appealing look as she gave him, and he said:

"Well, you must blame yourself for the consequences."

"Yes—yes, I will gladly do that," she replied, settling down into the seat with a happy smile on her face.

"Bedad, she's worth more than all the rist av us!" said Barney. "Now, dhrive off wid yer stame horses!"

The Tally-Ho dashed away out of the town in fine style, followed by the best wishes of every living soul in the place.

"Oh, this is delightful!" exclaimed Emma, her cheeks glowing and eyes ablaze with joy at her mission.

"Yes, indeed, it is," said Charley. "We get the pure air of Heaven, and enjoy it more for the excitement."

"It is perfectly lovely. I didn't appreciate it for the first time, because I was inside. You must have thought I would get away from you."

"Well, we didn't know how tame you were," remarked Charley, smiling.

"Oh, you did it in kindness, I know. You

thought the night air too cool for me, and that I needed sleep. Do you know I never slept any at all that night?"

"Indeed?"

"No. I was so full of joy at my escape from Santanda that I could not sleep. Oh, you don't know how horrible my captivity was. That is why I could not remain behind: I can be happy searching for my sister."

"I know you will be happy when you find her."

"Yes; it will be the happiest moment of my life. We loved each other dearly, and we are all that are left of our family;" and her eyes filled with tears as she spoke.

They found her very intelligent, and well read up to the time of her capture.

"Oh, there's a wolf!" she exclaimed, as she caught sight of a coyote in the bushes, as they went rushing down the valley below Devil's Hole. "Give me a rifle; I used to be a good shot. The Comanches would not let me have a gun, of course, but I don't think I have forgotten how to use one."

"Of course—get my rifle for her, Charley," said Frank. "You can use my gun while I attend to the team."

By the time Charley got the rifle the Tally-Ho was a mile below the coyote. But she took the gun, examined it carefully and asked but two questions about its management. It was the first Winchester she had ever touched, but she was sensible, and soon understood what she was told.

"There's another coyote!" exclaimed Charley, pointing to one two hundred rods away. She gazed in the direction indicated and saw the animal.

Quick as an old marksman could have done it she raised the rifle to her shoulder, aimed and fired.

The coyote sprang into the air as though shot out of a mortar, and fell dead as a herring. "Whoop—hooray!" yelled Barney O'Shea.

"Dat war a good shot, shuah," said Pomp, grinning from ear to ear.

"That takes the prize!" said Frank, laughing. "But could you shoot a man as well?"

"I don't know. I think I could shoot Indians all day and never miss a shot."

"That's the talk!" exclaimed Charley, grasping her hand. "Ain't I glad you came? You're worth a dozen men."

She blushed and laughed.

"I knew you would be glad I came," she said. "I can act as interpreter with the Indians."

"Yes, and fight, too, if necessary."

"Of course, for I hate them as much as a mortal can hate anything."

The sun went down and the stars came out in twinkling myriads. Still she remained seated on top of the Tally-Ho, anxious to be out when they came in contact with any Indians.

Midnight came, and Frank and Charley persuaded her to go inside and sleep, promising to call her if any Indian showed up.

She slept till sunrise, and then got out on the front seat with Frank.

Away out on the left they saw thousands of buffaloes, and many Indians on ponies hunting them.

"Oh, we won't have any trouble in the villages," said Emma. "The braves are all away hunting buffaloes. They are gathering their supply of meat for the winter. I am so glad."

"Yes; that will make it easier for us," said Frank.

"Oh, yes; much easier."

They pushed on further south, and struck the village where they had left the Chief Santanda the week before. They did not stop there, as Emma said her sister had been carried to one of the low villages.

Twenty miles below there was another village on the banks of a river.

To that they hastened, dashing into the very heart of the town, and setting all three steam whistles going at once.

Every man, woman and child rushed out to see what caused such a terrible racket.

Emma Thorpe stood up and gazed at every

face with a keen scrutiny that fully attested her extreme anxiety.

"Do you see her?" Frank asked.

"No."

"Then we'll search every wigwam in the town," said Charley, leaping to the ground, followed by Pomp and Barney.

"I'll go with you," and down she leaped as lightly as a fawn.

Some of the Indians recognized her, and in another instant there was a bedlam of sounds; every old squaw screeched and howled, and a dozen rushed at her to tear her to pieces.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DARING RESCUE.

Of course the attack on Emma Thorpe by the Comanche squaws was caused by the stories they had heard of her recapture by the Tally-Ho—the great stage, whose horses, like the sun, never grew tired. Her presence in their midst at once revealed the character of the Tally-Ho. They saw that she had brought them there, and therefore, being but a woman, they vowed to scratch her eyes out.

But Emma had a revolver in her hand. She would kill every squaw in north Texas if it was necessary to rescue her only sister.

She raised the revolver, pulled the trigger, and an old Comanche hag staggered back into the arms of another, a dead aborigine.

The others screeched all the more and ran in every direction.

She cried out in good Comanche:

"Be still! I only want my sister. If she is here you must give her up, or you will all be killed."

This caused every squaw to stop and stare.

The old men muttered and the children stared at the great steam horses.

"Is my sister here?" Emma asked of one of the old men.

"No," was the reply.

"We will see—come," and leading the way she was followed by Charley, Pomp and Barney into the nearest wigwam.

The women commenced screeching again. She hastened out and told them they would all be slain if they did not remain perfectly quiet, and stand just where they were.

She then searched every wigwam in the village. Alice was not there. The women would not answer any questions as to her whereabouts.

"There's another village on the river below here," she said, climbing up to a seat beside Frank.

The others followed, and in a moment more the whistles scattered the Indians, and the Tally-Ho dashed away like a whirlwind.

An hour's run brought them in sight of another village.

Again the steam whistles emptied every wigwam in the village.

The women and children poured out in the greatest alarm. They thought it was a war-whoop from some new enemy.

They stared at the Tally-Ho and its five occupants in wondering amazement.

Emma stood up and asked in Comanche if the young pale-face maiden was in the village.

She was answered "No."

"If the Comanches speak not the truth now, they will perish."

"She is not here," said an old man, trembling with age. "She is in the village of Running Wolf."

"Ah! that is what I wanted to hear!" she exclaimed. "The village of Running Wolf is further to the south-west. I was there a year ago."

"Then here we go for that village," said Frank. "G'lang, there!" and the gallant steeds dashed away with railroad speed.

The village lay some thirty miles in a south-westerly direction. Ten miles brought them to the banks of a river which they must cross in order to reach the village.

"Here's a go," said Frank. "How in the world are we to cross this river?"

"There's a ford somewhere where the Comanches use," said Emma, "though I don't

know whether it was below or above here that I crossed."

"Well, we'll go down a few miles, and see if we can find a crossing place. We must get over there before the warriors, who are on the trail of the buffalo, can come to the protection of their villages."

The Tally-Ho pushed down the left bank of the stream several miles until they came to a place where a trail led into it.

"This looks like the place," said Emma; "let some one wade in and see how deep it is."

Pomp got down with his rifle and waded across. The water came nearly to his waist. He reached the other side and told them to come over.

"Hard sand bottom!" he yelled, and Frank boldly drove into the stream.

The horses went across in a brisk trot, and in a few minutes they were all safe on the other side.

"Climb up now, Pomp," said Charley, "we must lose no time."

"Hyer I is—go ahead," said Pomp, climbing to his seat.

The Tally-Ho dashed away, and ere two hours passed saw smoke in the distance on their right.

"I think that smoke comes from the village," remarked Emma, as she gazed in that direction.

"Well, we'll soon find out," said Frank, turning in that direction.

A sharp run of half an hour brought them in sight of a small collection of wigwams on the skirts of a belt of timber.

"Yes, this is the place, I recollect that timber. Oh, if Alice is only here!"

"We'll soon see," and as they dashed into the heart of the village, Frank let go the three whistles all at once.

Had a swarm of angry hornets been turned loose in each wigwam in that village they could not have been emptied quicker than they were by those steam whistles.

Every man, woman, and child tumbled out pell-mell, wondering what in all creation had broken loose.

The sight of such a magnificent turn-out made them stare as they never stared before. Such spirited-looking horses and such a lofty-looking vehicle! What could it mean? And they were pale-faces, too, except one which was as black as the ace of spades—only they knew nothing about spades.

Emma Thorpe stood up in the Tally-Ho, and spoke to the Comanches in their own tongue.

"Comanches, we have come for the pale-face maiden—"

"Sister—Sister Emma!" cried a nut-brown maiden, tastily dressed in Indian garb, rushing through the crowd of staring women, children, and old men.

"Alice—thank Heaven!" and Emma made a flying leap and landed on the ground nearly ten feet away.

Alice sprang forward and was clasped in her arms, both almost fainting from excess of joy at seeing each other again.

"Jump down and get them up here before the Indians get over their surprise," whispered Frank to Charley.

"Yes—Pomp—Barney—follow me!" and Charley leaped to the ground, followed instantly by the negro and Irishman. Pushing his way to the side of the two girls, he seized Alice, who was smaller than her sister, lifted her from the ground, and bore her to the Tally-Ho, saying, tenderly:

"We have come for you, Alice Thorpe—you are free again!"

Alice threw her arms about his neck and clung to him. In another minute she was seated in the Tally-Ho, with the strong arm of Charley Gorse encircling her waist.

Just at this moment four stalwart warriors came up. They were in another part of the village when they heard the whistles. On reaching the spot they saw that a rescue of the maiden was the object of the strangers' visit.

Drawing their tomahawks they uttered terrific war-whoops and rushed upon Barney and Pomp.

Pomp drew his revolver and shot one dead. Emma coolly opened fire on another, and Barney, like the reckless dare-devil he was, returned the whoop and closed with the one who charged on him; Pomp took charge of the fourth one, butting him in the stomach and knocking him double.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, and he wrenched the tomahawk out of the Indian's hand. "Come up, ye red devil, an' give us a rale ould shindy! How's that for an Irish thump, ye grunter!" and giving him a stunning blow on his right eye he sent him reeling over against a dozen chattering squaws. But he did not stop there. He followed him up and put in blow after blow till he went down, bleeding and senseless.

At this the squaws screeched like so many devils, running here and there, gathering up their papooses and flying to their wigwams with them.

"All aboard!" cried Frank.

"Up wid yez, ye quane of the worruld!" cried Barney, seizing Emma around the waist and almost tossing her to her seat on the Tally-Ho.

The next moment he and Pomp climbed up and seated themselves behind.

"Now off with you, Frank!" cried Charley, as Emma pushed him forward to a seat by the young inventor's side, that she might get beside her sister.

"Yes; all ready?"

"All ready," was the reply; and the next moment the steam whistles shrieked defiance, and then the gallant iron steeds dashed away, leaving the village of the chief, Running Wolf, dumfounded at the terrible consequences of their visit.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LAST STRUGGLE OF THE COMANCHES.

As the Tally-Ho dashed away over the plains at the great speed the iron horses were capable of making, Alice, who was still clasped in her sister's arms, exclaimed:

"Mercy! the horses are running away!"

"Yes, running away from the Indians, sister," said Emma. "They are iron horses run by steam. They can run a week just this way. The Indians can never catch us any more now."

Alice sprang up and gazed with open-eyed astonishment at the bounding steeds. She could scarcely believe her own eyes.

"Oh, sister!" she exclaimed. "It seems so like a dream! I never expected to see you again."

"Neither did I expect to see you, dear Alice," replied Emma; "but one day the Tally-Ho came dashing into Santanda's village. We all ran out to see what it was. They saw me among the squaws, and this good friend back here," pointing to Barney O'Shea, on the seat behind them, "seized me around the waist, passed me up to a seat, and then they just ran off with me. Oh, they have been so kind to me! More than brothers—supplying all my wants, and calling me the 'Daughter of the Tally-Ho!'"

Alice burst into tears. Such kindness touched her heart.

"Heaven will bless them!" she murmured.

"Yes, for they are the kindest, noblest of men," assented Emma.

Then they dropped into a long, whispered conversation, for they had much to say to each other, many heart-rending tales to tell. The four generous-hearted men left them to themselves.

"Emma," said Charley, "you and Alice get inside and rest awhile. You can talk more freely there than here."

"Yes, and I am very tired, too," replied Emma, and then they opened the Tally-Ho and passed them in, where they rested at full length on the tent-cloth and blankets.

The river was soon reached and crossed. On the other side they halted and took in both wood and water.

"It's always best to do that at every opportunity," said Frank, "as we don't know what might happen when away out on the plains."

This attended to, the Tally-Ho party concluded to have a good game dinner right there under the shade of the trees. Charley caught fish out of the river; Pomp made a fire, and Frank shot several prairie hens, while Barney got out the cooking utensils, and prepared to cook the game.

"Oh, let me show you how I can cook!" cried Emma, rolling up her sleeves. "I am a famous cook, as you will see."

"But you are our guest," said Frank, "and we—"

"Why I thought you told me I was one of the family—a daughter of the Tally-Ho!"

"I weaken, Sis," said Frank, laughing heartily. "Have your own way. You are house-keeper."

Such a dinner as she and Alice did get up! such fried fish, and broiled prairie hen! such delicious coffee and bread!

"Bedad!" exclaimed Barney, "I'm just wened. I niver ate anything before in me life!"

Frank and Charley roared, and the two sisters blushed, laughed, and were as happy as two kittens.

Two hours were passed at the little camp, and then the dishes and cooking utensils were cleaned and packed away, and preparations to renew the journey were made.

"Halloo! Look out there, Frank!" cried Charley, pointing toward the east.

All eyes were turned in that direction, and a deep silence fell upon them.

Full half a hundred Comanche warriors, on their ponies, were bearing down upon them, not more than a mile away.

"Oh, we are lost!" gasped Alice, turning pale and trembling like a leaf.

"Oh, no, sister," said Emma, whose faith in the brave Tally-Ho men was unbounded. "We are not even in any danger."

"Why, look at them," exclaimed Alice. "There's nearly a hundred of them."

"All aboard!" cried Frank, springing up on the front seat of the Tally-Ho.

Barney and Charley assisted Emma and Alice to their seats, and then mounted to their places.

"G'lang there!" cried Frank, and the iron horses dashed away like a whirlwind.

The Comanches had been informed by a runner that the pale-faces and their screaming horses had gone to Running Wolf's village to get the fair captive there. Running Wolf collected fifty of his warriors, and hastened homeward, meeting the Tally-Ho at the river.

Of course the Tally-Ho kept out of rifle-shot distance, and let the Indians pursue as long as they pleased.

"Don't you see they can never catch us?" said Emma to her sister, as they watched the desperate efforts of the Comanches to get within shooting distance of the Tally-Ho.

"Oh, I am so glad!" and Alice clapped her hands in almost childish glee.

Then, as a sudden thought came into her mind, she grew sad again.

"They will follow the trail," she said, "and murder us all in our sleep."

"I don't think they will," said Frank. "The sun is yet an hour high. We can get them out on the plains and destroy them. Eh, Charley?"

"Yes—let's make 'em sick of white faces altogether," replied Charley. "Get out guns, Pomp."

Pomp got out four rifles—the terrible Winchester. Emma took one, and Barney, Charley and Pomp the other three.

"Wait till we get a good ways out," suggested Charley.

They did wait. The Comanches followed with that dogged pertinacity for which they are famous, until they were nearly twenty miles away from the timber on the river bank.

"Now, Emma, try your skill on that fellow out there who seems most anxious to get acquainted with us," said Charley, pointing to an Indian whose pony had placed him in the lead.

"Why, sister!" exclaimed Alice, as Emma arose to her feet and prepared to draw a bead on the foremost Indian. "Would you kill a human being?"

"Alice, those fiends are the murderers of our parents," replied Emma. "I could deliberately kill every man, woman, and child of the fiendish race!" and with that she raised the rifle, took deliberate aim, and fired.

The Indian was fully a quarter of a mile away, but the aim was true. He tumbled off his horse, for the ball entered his breast, and went almost through him.

"A splendid shot!" cried Charley.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney. "It's a broth av a lass she is!"

"Golly, but it made 'em sick!" put in Pomp, grinning from ear to ear.

"Try another," said Frank.

She did, and another warrior sped away to the happy hunting-ground of his race.

Then Charley and Pomp and Barney opened fire, and in less than five minutes nearly half the ponies of the pursuers were scampering riderless over the plains.

The rifles of the Comanches could not reach the Tally-Ho. Their bullets fell short of the mark, while nearly every shot of the terrible Winchester rifles emptied a saddle.

Suddenly they halted. Running Wolf did not care to court death by pursuing any further.

"Now let's scatter them!" and the Tally-Ho turned and dashed toward them.

With yells of fear, the Comanches turned and fled toward the river. The Tally-Ho pushed them hard, and many went down to rise no more. Running Wolf himself was shot in the back, and gave a death-yell as he went down.

The band then scattered, every one going in a different direction as fast as his pony could carry him.

"Let 'em go now," said Frank. "They've got enough. We shall not hear from them again."

"Whoop!" yelled Barney O'Shea, as he gave them a parting shot. "May the devil fly away wid yez!"

The Tally-Ho then turned northward, just as the sun was sinking in the golden-tinted horizon, and the gallant iron steeds dashed forward for an all-night trip.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A TERRIBLE DANGER.

THE stars came out and twinkled brilliantly, as if rejoicing over the rescue of the young maiden from the clutches of the Comanche fiends.

Charley and Frank, who had fine voices, sang several songs together. Then Barney sang several Irish ditties, and altogether it was a lively, joyous party.

When midnight came, the two sisters were placed inside to sleep. The others watched and drove by turns, sleeping in their seats, which they could do with perfect safety.

Sunrise found them just entering the hill country at the lower end of the Devil's Hole Valley.

"Oh, we'll soon be at home among dear friends," said Emma, kissing her sister, as they emerged into the morning air.

She then told her how kind the people of that queerly-named town had been to her, saying:

"Everybody there seems to be anxious to do something for me, as though I was a daughter or sister to every one of them."

Alice was happy and tearful. It seemed so like a dream to her.

When they reached Devil's Hole, the steam whistles announced their arrival. The whole village turned out to welcome them, and the rescued maiden was received with open arms and shouts of welcome.

The town put on its holiday attire and spent the day in rejoicings and congratulations. The men drank whisky and the women feasted the two sisters, and made heroes of Frank Reade and his three companions.

They were gone but three days, and therefore had seven days more on their hands before the Santa Fe mail would be in.

This time he wanted to improve by overhauling the machinery of the three horses, as they had now traveled several thousand miles since they started out on their Western tour.

Barney, Pomp and Charley aided him in the work, and three days were thus spent. The horses were all taken to pieces and every part thoroughly examined. But little evidence of wear and tear were found, and they were put together again.

Two days were spent in giving excursion rides to the mothers and daughters of Devil's Hole, who appreciated the pleasure to its fullest worth.

When the Santa Fe mail stage came in, General Dodworth, of the United States Army, was a passenger. He was on his way East on important business in connection with the military department of New Mexico.

He was introduced to Frank and Charley by the postmaster, who received him with the respect due his rank.

"The postmaster has been telling me of your wonderful invention, Mr. Reade," said the general.

Frank bowed and smiled.

"They haven't got anything else to talk about just now, sir," he said.

"I am sure that is enough. The whole world will soon be talking about it, I think."

"You seem to appreciate its value, general."

"I can see the future revolution it will bring about in this part of the country," remarked the general.

"I think it could be of some benefit to a country like this," said Frank; "as we have done much good already."

"So the postmaster tells me. I shall have an opportunity of judging for myself on the through trip. How long before we start?"

"As soon as the mail is transferred."

Only an hour was required to transfer the mail, and then the Tally-Ho was ready for the long trip northward.

General Dodworth's trunk was placed inside. He mounted to the seat, alongside of Frank, and then the whistles blew a good-bye to Devil's Hole.

"G'lang there!" cried Frank, gayly, and the three splendid iron steeds dashed away as if for a purse of thousands.

When they reached the plains the full speed was put on, and the Tally-Ho dashed on toward the river like a locomotive.

"This is the triumph of inventive genius, young man!" exclaimed the general, in his enthusiasm. "Nothing can go beyond this!"

"Don't put any limit on human possibilities, sir," said Frank, laughing. "People will some day fly about like eagles."

"I am almost tempted to believe you."

"You may not believe, yet may live to see it."

"I am almost prepared to believe anything after this," assented the general.

They reached the river at the usual crossing place, and boldly entered at a brisk trot. Reaching the other side they halted, took in more water, and then dashed on at a speed of thirty miles an hour.

The afternoon and night passed without any incident of note occurring. The general slept inside on the tent-cloth and blankets as well as in a bed in an hotel, and awoke the next morning greatly refreshed.

But about noon the next day, they noticed a smoky cloud all along the horizon in front of them. It became more distinct every moment as they advanced, growing higher and higher.

"My God!" exclaimed Charley, "the prairie is on fire!"

"Whoa, boys!" and Frank suddenly halted the team. "What's that you say, Charley Gorse?"

"The prairie is on fire!" repeated Charley. "That cloud out there is simply smoke. Look at those deers, buffaloes, and other animals flying before it. I tell you it's fire, and a big one at that."

"Yes," said the general, "and it's at least thirty miles wide. Our only chance is to outrun it, and recross the river."

"Why, that river is 150 miles back!" exclaimed Frank.

"Yes—but what if it's a thousand?" asked the general. "We must place it between us and this fire."

Frank remained in deep thought for a minute or two.

"General," he asked, "have you ever seen a prairie fire before?"

"Yes, several times."

"How was it? The grass soon burned out, didn't it?"

"Wes, but the flames ran sometimes ten feet high. No living thing could pass through it."

"Well, if it burns down quick we can run through it quickly."

The general and Charley almost leaped out of their seat.

"You are crazy, Frank Reade!" exclaimed Charley.

"Yes, stark mad," added General Dodworth.

"Maybe I am," said Frank; "but if we get inside here, and dash through it at the rate of a mile in two minutes, what harm can come to us? The horses are iron, and so is the coach."

Charley looked at Frank and saw that he meant business.

"I will go with you," he said. "I never thought of that. The fact is, I am afraid of fire, and that may be the reason of my scare."

"Gentlemen, it's too dangerous," protested the general.

"Get inside!" said Frank.

The Tally-Ho opened and they all got inside.

The flames came rushing on toward them like a flood overflowing the land, roaring, crackling and darting fiery tongues out after the fleeing, terrified animals.

"Now for it!" cried Frank, and the Tally-Ho dashed forward at its utmost into the roaring blaze.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THROUGH THE FLAMES.

THEY were trying to make a dash through a sea of fire—the great prairie being in a terrific blaze as far as the eye could reach.

It looked like a world on fire.

The flames ran along the top of the dry grass at the rate of ten miles an hour, which was about the velocity of the wind. Behind that was a sea of flame consuming the heavier portions of the grass and sending up black masses of smoke mountains high.

It was through this sea of flame that Frank Reade resolved to dash rather than go back 150 miles to the river, and thus lose two days of his time.

He had faith in his ability to get through safely. He knew that neither the horses nor the Tally-Ho could burn, though they might get too hot to make it comfortable.

Into the wall of flame they dashed, rushing like the whirlwind, and the next moment they heard the hissing and crackling that seems the life of fire.

"We are in it now!" gasped Charley.

"Yes, and going through it," said Frank, as he listened to the roar of the flames without.

"This is a terrible risk," said General Dodworth, huskily.

"I shall never forget it myself," remarked Frank.

"You may not live to remember it, young man."

"Maybe not; but we are going all right yet, general."

"Yes, and the stage is getting hot as an oven!"

"Oh, Lord, I'm a-bakin'!" exclaimed Pomp, moving from against the side of the Tally-Ho, where the heat was too much for him.

"Be the powers!" cried Barney, "av I bake good an' brown sind a sloyce av me to me mith-er."

Charley laughed outright.

The idea seemed so absurd under the circumstances that he could not refrain from laughing.

But it grew hot—hotter—in the Tally-Ho, and still the iron team dashed madly on. The flames still roared and crackled all around them, though Frank imagined he could see less fury in them than at the start.

Suddenly they reached a spot where the

flames did not reach to the hubs of the wheels. In another moment they were clear even of that, and were among only smoking tufts of grass.

"We are safe!" he exclaimed. "Nothing but smoke remains."

"Whoop!" cried Barney; "let me out. Faith an' I'm roastin', I am!"

The Tally-Ho was thrown open, and the five men stood up gasping for fresh air. The atmosphere was full of smoke, so it was but little fresh air they got until they made another ten miles, at which point the wind had blown the smoke away.

"Young man," said General Dodworth, turning to Frank, "I hardly know what to say of you. You displayed extraordinary nerve, yet I cannot but think it was foolhardy."

"I did it after mature deliberation, general," replied Frank, "having implicit faith in our ability to get through. You see, we have saved fully 300 miles by pushing through."

"But we might have pushed through to the other side of Jordan."

"Only one chance of that, general," answered Frank.

"How?"

"In the event of the team breaking down and stopping. We would then have roasted finely, for I think the Tally-Ho would make a first-rate oven."

"No doubt of it—an oven on wheels. Better run the other way, next time, young man."

"Nothing like pluck, general," laughed Frank, as he mounted to his usual seat and took the lines.

"Well, 'all's well that ends well.' I shall have something to talk about in my old age. I've been in many a tight place, but consider that the worse scrape of all."

They all laughed, and felt glad that the danger was past.

"We can make better time now, I think, than in that long grass."

And they did. The Tally-Ho rolled along smoothly at a tremendous speed. All along the way deer, buffalo, coyotes, and other animals, were found half roasted, overtaken by the flames after they had been exhausted.

The extent of ground burned over was immense, as they traveled 200 miles over the line till they struck another stream which it could not cross.

They found a ford, and crossed, took in more fuel and water, and then hastened northward with a detention of only one hour. The route lay through a gently rolling country, where much game abounded. But as the general was anxious to get through to Washington as soon as possible, they did not stop to shoot any game.

But on the afternoon of the third day Charley desired to shoot a large deer, and carry it in to the wife of the postmaster at the end of the route, and make her a present of it.

They soon came across one, and stopped long enough to secure it, after which they pushed on with full speed, reaching the station at sunset, the quickest trip ever made.

"Young man," said General Dodworth, "I am your friend from this hour. Your genius will make kings proud to know and claim you as their friend. Here is my card. If I can ever be of service to you, command me and I will obey."

"Thanks, General," said Frank. "You can do me good by calling the attention of the government to my Tally-Ho. I intend to take a mail contract."

"You can make a fortune at that in one year's time, young man. I will sing your praises wherever I go, rest assured of that."

They remained at the station that night, when the general took the early morning train East.

Charley presented the carcass of the deer to the postmaster's wife, and, in return, was astonished at what the postmaster had to say.

"You left seventy-five rifles with me to ship East for you," he said. "But I didn't do it. A speculator came along and offered me thirty dollars each for the lot—\$2,250 for the whole—and I took it, thinking that would be as well as you could do anywhere. Here is the

money," and drawing a huge wallet from his bosom, he counted out the money and placed it in Charley's hand.

"By George, but that was well done!" exclaimed Charley; "hanged if I don't bring in another load if we have to kill a whole tribe of Indians to get 'em!"

"Good rifles find a ready sale in this part of the world, young man," replied the postmaster.

Frank was delighted.

"But what shall we do with the money?" Charley asked.

"Give it to Emma and Alice," suggested Frank. "They have lost everything, and it would enable them to set up for themselves somewhere."

"Good! Just the thing! I'll take it back to them!" and Charley put the money away to carry back to the two orphan girls at Devil's Hole.

There were many bad characters about the station, men who lived by cards, murders and robberies. Among these were three noted gamblers who had been very inquisitive about the mode and manner of working the Tally-Ho. For some reason or other Barney O'Shea became very suspicious of them, and played spy to see what they were up to.

He suspected an attempt on their part to steal the Tally-Ho and make off with it, and at last overheard enough to convince him of the fact.

He accordingly informed Frank of what he had heard.

"We'll play 'em a trick worth two of that," said Frank. "We'll all sleep inside to-night, and let 'em run away with it."

They crept inside unperceived by any one, Frank keeping steam up for the occasion, and quietly waited for the appearance of the would-be thieves.

At midnight they came, and seeing no one about—they had come to kill the guard—they sprang up on the seats, pulled the crank, and shot off out of the town like a thunderbolt.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TALLY-HO STOLEN—THE THIEVES CAPTURED.

THOUGH the three gamblers sat on the front seat, and one of them held the reins, Frank was guiding the course of the Tally-Ho from his place inside, the construction of the machinery having been made with a view to just such an emergency as had now come upon them.

Out on the broad plains the gallant team dashed like a shooting-star, and the three gamblers fairly yelled over the success of their scheme.

"This is our best haul, boys!" said one. "It makes us masters of the plains. They can never catch us. Whoop-la—g'lang there!"

"Yes," added another, "and we can boss all the gangs, red and white."

"Of course we can. We can dash into a town, clean out a bank, take choice of the pretty girls and get away, and all the officers in the world can't catch us. Pshaw! a gold mine is nothing to this."

"Which way shall we go?"

"Anywhere out of the way till we get the hang of the thing," replied the driver, who seemed to be the leader. "Then we can commence operations along some of the prairie towns."

The Tally-Ho sped along until midnight found them nearly one hundred miles out on the plains.

"How far will you carry them?" Charley Gorse asked of Frank inside.

"Oh, I guess we've come far enough now," replied Frank, in a whisper.

"What shall we do with them?"

"That's a question—ah! I have it. See those Indians out there?"

"Yes," answered Charley, peeping through a port-hole at a score of Indians on horseback a mile away who were regarding the Tally-Ho with undisguised interest.

"Well, suppose we turn these rascals over to them?"

"Bully! Just the thing."

"Bedad, thin, we'll have no ruction wid

'em," said Barney, becoming disgusted with the turn affairs were taking.

"Keep quiet, Barney; we'll have a glorious ruction for you yet," urged Charley.

"Get ready now. I'll open the rear part of the top. We'll rise up behind them, and clap revolvers to their heads. Ready?"

"Yes."

The after part of the top of the Tally-Ho opened, and the four men quietly rose to their feet, and clapped revolvers against the heads of the four rascals.

"Well, how does it work?" Frank quietly asked of his man.

At the sound of his voice, the three men looked around and stared into black muzzles of loaded revolvers.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Frank, "quite a surprise, isn't it? Wasn't looking for us, eh?"

"No," gasped the leader. "I weaken, stranger."

"Of course you do. Hold up your hands."

Up went three pairs of hands.

"Go through them, Pomp, but take nothing but arms."

Pomp soon relieved them of their knives and revolvers.

"Now, how do you like the Tally-Ho, gentlemen?" Frank asked.

"First-rate," replied the leader, "but not as well as I did ten minutes ago. I now wish I had never seen it."

"I believe you," remarked Frank. "But you should not yield so readily to temptation. Now, what do you propose to do about this thing? You know the penalty for horse-stealing in this part of Uncle Sam's dominions?"

The three men looked at each other, but made no reply.

"You know that horse-thieves are summarily disposed of when captured?"

"Y-y-yes," stammered the leader; "but these ain't horses."

"What are they, then?"

"Machinery," was the reply.

"But Judge Lyach would call them steam or iron horses, would he not?"

"Guess he would," was the reply.

"Of course he would. Now, look here. We've killed quite a number of just such fools as you. We are tired of it. We don't propose doing anything of the kind in your case. But we intend to give you a lesson you will remember for some time, I think. We are nearly one hundred miles from the nearest settlement. You must get down and walk back. We can't give you a ride. Now jump—off with you!"

The astounded gamblers seemed paralyzed by the situation. They looked first at the young inventor, and then at the band of Indians pursuing the Tally-Ho a mile away.

"Just one minute more, and you are dead men, if you are not off this stage!" hissed Frank, pulling out his watch and looking at it.

That was enough.

With a howl of despair, the leader sprang from the seat, lit on his feet, and rolled over and over in the grass, for the Tally-Ho was going at the rate of ten miles an hour.

The other two followed almost simultaneously, each rolling over as he struck the ground.

"Ha—ha—ha—whoop! Yah—yah!" roared all the four Tally-Ho boys at once, as the three rascals arose to their knees, clasped their hands, and looked appealingly towards Frank and his companions.

When a half-mile away the Tally-Ho stopped. They wanted to see the result of the villains' meeting with the Indians.

The red-skins dashed up and surrounded them, yelling like so many demons, flourishing their tomahawks, and making other hostile demonstrations.

The three gamblers were roughly seized and instantly robbed of all their valuables. Even their coats, vests, hats and boots were taken from them by the greedy red Bedouins of the plains.

"They are using them roughly," said Charley.

"Yes—but not as badly as they deserve," replied Frank.

"No; but it will go hard with them yet, I guess."

"I hope so. They are nothing but sneak robbers."

"Begorra, but it's tying 'em they are," said Barney, as the red-skins proceeded to bind the three prisoners.

"Yes; and some of them are coming to pay us a visit."

"I'll give 'em a whistle," and the next moment the three whistles rang out for miles over the plains.

The Indians instantly halted and glared with astonishment.

They gave a series of whoops in answer.

The whistles replied, and deeming them yells of defiance, the Indians charged.

"Let 'em have it, boys," cried Frank, raising his rifle.

The others did the same, and four Indians tumbled out of their saddles.

Another whistle and another shot sent them back in dismay. They had not been in rifle-shot of the Tally-Ho, and yet eight of their number had been hit, five of whom were dead.

That was enough for them.

They wanted no more of that in theirs, so they went back to their three prisoners, and started off in a south-westerly direction.

"Good bye, boys!" yelled Frank, as the half-naked prisoners were strapped to the backs of ponies and led away.

The whistles also shrieked a jolly farewell to them.

Then the Tally-Ho resumed its trip back to the station whence it had been stolen, arriving there in the middle of the afternoon.

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCLUSION.

THE mail being ready for them the Tally-Ho started on the return trip at daylight the next morning.

Hundreds were present to see them off, and were wild in their enthusiasm. They sent cheer after cheer as the Tally-Ho started. The whistles responded, and then the team dashed away with lightning speed.

The return trip was without interest save in the matter of speed. They made good time, having nothing to detain. Indians they saw in numbers, but they had had enough of the Tally-Ho. Those who had not fought it had heard of its terrific destructiveness, and preferred giving it a wide berth. They saw that the "lightning stage and screaming horses," as they called it, was disposed to let them alone if they left it to pursue its way unmolested, and therefore concluded that it was cheaper to let it pass without question.

On reaching Devil's Hole, they were received with every demonstration of delight. The citizens cheered, and the women waved handkerchiefs.

The first to take them by the hand when they sprang to the ground, were Emma and Alice Thorpe.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you back again!" Emma exclaimed. "It did seem so long since you went away."

"We came back as soon as we could," replied Charley. "We have some good news for you, and when we get the mail out and the team put away, we'll come in and tell you about it. Oh, you look sweet enough to eat, Alice."

Alice had been dressed in the garb of civilization, and was much prettier than her sister. She was five years younger, too. But that did not make her sister jealous. On the contrary, Emma was wrapt up in her—bestowed all her wealth of love upon her, and watched over her with motherly interest.

She blushed at the compliment, and said:

"I am so glad to see my dear brothers of the Tally-Ho that I forgive you that. The people have been so kind to us here. Everybody is kind to us."

"Yes," said Emma, "I never saw such kind people in my life. I would like to live always among such people."

That evening Charley and Frank called on the two sisters at the home of the postmaster over the stage office, and there gave the \$2,250 which the captured rifles had brought.

"We thought it would set you up in business," said Charley.

Emma, overcome at this generosity, burst into tears. But Alice, more vivacious than she, sprang up and kissed them both.

"No brothers were ever so kind," she said. "I don't know how to thank you, or what to do with the money. Why, I never saw so much money before in all my life!"

The two sisters were the happiest mortals ever seen in Devil's Hole. They told everybody of the generosity of the Tally-Ho team. The men took Charley and Frank on their shoulders, and carried them around the town, declaring them the whitest men in the settlement.

Emma and Alice were advised to open a store in Devil's Hole, and call it the "Tally-Ho Store," and they concluded to do so.

"But we don't know anything about keeping a store," said Emma.

"You can soon learn," said Charley. "Just ask double what you give for anything and demand the cash, and you'll soon be rich if you sell much."

"Oh, we can do that."

"And sign a pledge not to get married for two years?" suggested Frank.

"Yes, of course," laughed Emma, blushing like a rose.

"But where can we get the goods?" Alice asked.

"Oh, we can buy them for you," said Charley.

"Then take back the money and do so."

"Keep \$250—give me the balance, and have a store ready by time we return," replied Charley, taking the money.

The postmaster agreed to build an addition to the stage-office and rent it to them, and board them in his family.

This settled, the Tally-Ho set out in another week to carry the mails through again. They met with no exciting adventures on the way.

When they reached the railroad, Charley went east to the nearest large city and bought a bill of goods for the two sisters, which he brought back, having been gone just one week.

They carried the goods through in the Tally-Ho free of charge, and turned them over to Emma and Alice, who opened and displayed them in the new addition which had been put up for them. Having paid no freight except on the railroad, they put the goods at a moderate price, yet getting three for one on the cost.

"By Jove, Frank, let's go in copartnership with the girls!" exclaimed Charley. "There's a large range of herders, miners, and hunters to the west and south-west of Devil's Hole that would come here for their supplies. We can undersell anybody in the business and reap a big fortune out of it."

"Maybe they don't want any partners," said Frank.

"Oh, don't we!" exclaimed Emma. "Just try us and see!"

"Well, it's a bargain then, if you say so."

"Good—good!" cried Emma and Alice, clapping their hands in delight.

Then they quietly went to work and bought out a large store-house which had only a few hundred dollars' worth of stock in it. Into this they put a large stock of goods, bringing more goods at every trip, until they were able to supply small dealers even in Santa Fe.

Emma and Alice figured as proprietors of the store. Dozens of men offered to marry them, but they declined graciously, and still retained their friendship.

The postmaster at Devil's Hole secured the mail contract, and entered into a copartnership with Frank and Charley to carry the mails at a figure that would make them rich in a couple of years.

The through mails changed routes in consequence in several directions, and business flowed into Devil's Hole in a rush that was startling. The two sisters developed a wonderful tact for business, and soon became rich, while the mail contract piled up the bank account of our two heroes at an astonishing rate.

We leave them here, promising our readers to recount to them, at some future time, the many wonderful adventures that befell them in the great South-west.

[THE END.]

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